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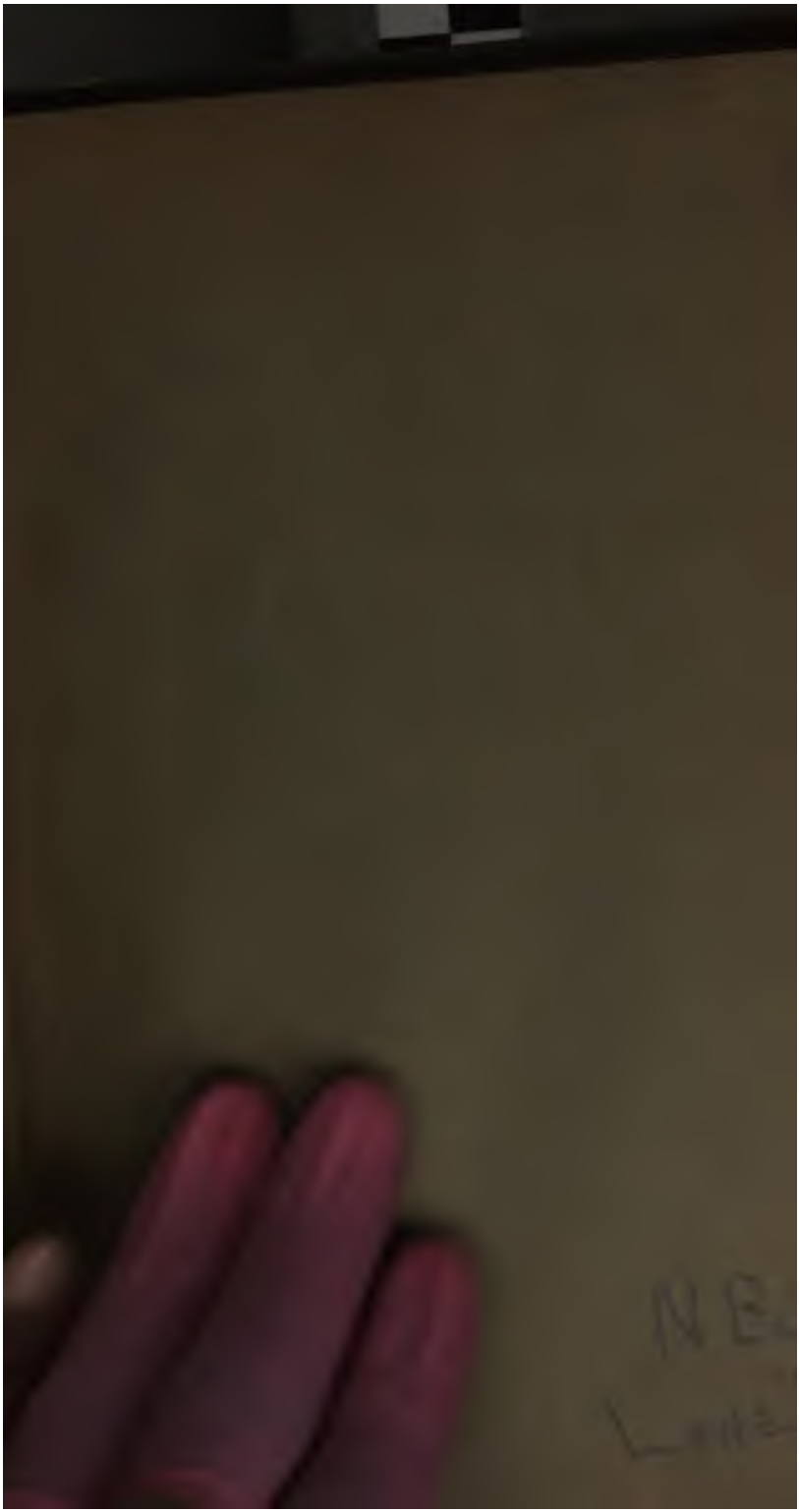

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Standard Library Edition

THE WORKS OF
JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

ILLUSTRATED WITH STEEL PORTRAITS AND PHOTOGRAVURES

VOLUME II

THE POETICAL WORKS

OF

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOLUME I.

EARLIER POEMS, THE VISION OF SIR LAUNFAL, ETC.

1892

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1892

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LITERARY ESSAYS

NEW ENGLAND TWO CENTURIES AGO[1]

1865

THE history of New England is written imperishably on the face of a continent, and in characters as beneficent as they are enduring. In the Old World national pride feeds itself with the record of battles and conquests; — battles which proved nothing and settled nothing; conquests which shifted a boundary on the map, and put one ugly head instead of another on the coin which the people paid to the tax-gatherer. But wherever the New-Englander travels among the sturdy commonwealths which have sprung from the seed of the Mayflower, churches, schools, colleges, tell him where the men of his race have been, or their influence has penetrated; and an intelligent freedom is the monument of conquests whose results are not to be measured in square miles. Next to the fugitives whom Moses led out of Egypt, the little shipload of outcasts who landed at Plymouth two centuries and a half ago are destined to influence the future of the world. The spiritual thirst of man-

[1] *History of New England during the Stuart Dynasty.* By John Gorham Palfrey. Vol. iii.

Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society. Third Series, vols. ix. and x. Fourth Series, vols. vi. and vii.

kind has for ages been quenched at Hebrew fountains; but the embodiment in human institutions of truths uttered by the Son of Man eighteen centuries ago was to be mainly the work of Puritan thought and Puritan self-devotion. Leave New England out in the cold! While you are plotting it, she sits by every fireside in the land where there is piety, culture, and free thought.

Faith in God, faith in man, faith in work, — this is the short formula in which we may sum up the teaching of the founders of New England, a creed ample enough for this life and the next. If their municipal regulations smack somewhat of Judaism, yet there can be no nobler aim or more practical wisdom than theirs; for it was to make the law of man a living counterpart of the law of God, in their highest conception of it. Were they too earnest in the strife to save their souls alive? That is still the problem which every wise and brave man is lifelong in solving. If the Devil take a less hateful shape to us than to our fathers, he is as busy with us as with them; and if we cannot find it in our hearts to break with a gentleman of so much worldly wisdom, who gives such admirable dinners, and whose manners are so perfect, so much the worse for us.

Looked at on the outside, New England history is dry and unpicturesque. There is no rustle of silks, no waving of plumes, no clink of golden spurs. Our sympathies are not awakened by the changeful destinies, the rise and fall, of great families, whose doom was in their blood. Instead of

all this, we have the homespun fates of Cephas and Prudence repeated in an infinite series of peaceable sameness, and finding space enough for record in the family Bible; we have the noise of axe and hammer and saw, an apotheosis of dogged work, where, reversing the fairy-tale, nothing is left to luck, and, if there be any poetry, it is something that cannot be helped, — the waste of the water over the dam. Extrinsically, it is prosaic and plebeian; intrinsically, it is poetic and noble; for it is, perhaps, the most perfect incarnation of an idea the world has ever seen. That idea was not to found a democracy, nor to charter the city of New Jerusalem by an act of the General Court, as gentlemen seem to think whose notions of history and human nature rise like an exhalation from the good things at a Pilgrim Society dinner. Not in the least. They had no faith in the Divine institution of a system which gives Teague, because he can dig, as much influence as Ralph, because he can think, nor in personal at the expense of general freedom. Their view of human rights was not so limited that it could not take in human relations and duties also. They would have been likely to answer the claim, "I am as good as anybody," by a quiet "Yes, for some things, but not for others; as good, doubtless, in your place, where all things are good." What the early settlers of Massachusetts *did* intend, and what they accomplished, was the founding here of a *new* England, and a better one, where the political superstitions and abuses of the old should never have leave to

take root. So much, we may say, they deliberately intended. No nobles, either lay or cleric, no great landed estates, and no universal ignorance as the seed-plot of vice and unreason; but an elective magistracy and clergy, land for all who would till it, and reading and writing, will ye nill ye, instead. Here at last, it should seem, simple manhood is to have a chance to play his stake against Fortune with honest dice, uncogged by those three hoary sharpers, Prerogative, Patricianism, and Priest-craft. Whoever has looked into the pamphlets published in England during the Great Rebellion cannot but have been struck by the fact, that the principles and practice of the Puritan Colony had begun to react with considerable force on the mother country; and the policy of the retrograde party there, after the Restoration, in its dealings with New England, finds a curious parallel as to its motives (time will show whether as to its results) in the conduct of the same party towards America during the last four years.[1] This influence and this fear alike bear witness to the energy of the principles at work here.

We have said that the details of New England history were essentially dry and unpoetic. Everything is near, authentic, and petty. There is no mist of distance to soften outlines, no mirage of tradition to give characters and events an imaginative loom. So much downright work was perhaps never wrought on the earth's surface in the same space of time as during the first forty years after the

[1] Written in December, 1864.

settlement. But mere work is unpicturesque, and void of sentiment. Irving instinctively divined and admirably illustrated in his "Knickerbocker" the humorous element which lies in this nearness of view, this clear, prosaic daylight of modernness, and this poverty of stage properties, which make the actors and the deeds they were concerned in seem ludicrously small when contrasted with the semi-mythic grandeur in which we have clothed them, as we look backward from the crowned result, and fancy a cause as majestic as our conception of the effect. There was, indeed, one poetic side to the existence otherwise so narrow and practical; and to have conceived this, however partially, is the one original and American thing in Cooper. This diviner glimpse illumines the lives of our Daniel Boones, the man of civilization and old-world ideas confronted with our forest solitudes, — confronted, too, for the first time, with his real self, and so led gradually to disentangle the original substance of his manhood from the artificial results of culture. Here was our new Adam of the wilderness, forced to name anew, not the visible creation of God, but the invisible creation of man, in those forms that lie at the base of social institutions, so insensibly moulding personal character and controlling individual action. Here is the protagonist of our New World epic, a figure as poetic as that of Achilles, as ideally representative as that of Don Quixote, as romantic in its relation to our home-spun and plebeian mythus as Arthur in his to the mailed and plumed cycle of chivalry. We do not

mean, of course, that Cooper's "Leatherstocking" is all this or anything like it, but that the character typified in him is ideally and potentially all this and more.

But whatever was poetical in the lives of the early New Englanders had something shy, if not sombre, about it. If their natures flowered, it was out of sight, like the fern. It was in the practical that they showed their true quality, as Englishmen are wont. It has been the fashion lately with a few feeble-minded persons to undervalue the New England Puritans, as if they were nothing more than gloomy and narrow-minded fanatics. But all the charges brought against these large-minded and far-seeing men are precisely those which a really able fanatic, Joseph de Maistre, lays at the door of Protestantism. Neither a knowledge of human nature nor of history justifies us in confounding, as is commonly done, the Puritans of Old and New England, or the English Puritans of the third with those of the fifth decade of the seventeenth century. Fanaticism, or, to call it by its milder name, enthusiasm, is only powerful and active so long as it is aggressive. Establish it firmly in power, and it becomes conservatism, whether it will or no. A sceptre once put in the hand, the grip is instinctive; and he who is firmly seated in authority soon learns to think security, and not progress, the highest lesson of statecraft. From the summit of power men no longer turn their eyes upward, but begin to look about them. Aspiration sees only one side of every question; possession, many. And the Eng-

lish Puritans, after their revolution was accomplished, stood in even a more precarious position than most successful assailants of the prerogative of whatever *is* to continue in being. They had carried a political end by means of a religious revival. The fulcrum on which they rested their lever to overturn the existing order of things (as history always placidly calls the particular forms of *dis*order for the time being) was in the soul of man. They could not renew the fiery gush of enthusiasm when once the molten metal had begun to stiffen in the mould of policy and precedent. The religious element of Puritanism became insensibly merged in the political; and, its one great man taken away, it died, as passions have done before, of possession. It was one thing to shout with Cromwell before the battle of Dunbar, "Now, Lord, arise, and let thine enemies be scattered!" and to snuffle, "Rise, Lord, and keep us safe in our benefices, our sequestered estates, and our five per cent!" Puritanism meant something when Captain Hodgson, riding out to battle through the morning mist, turns over the command of his troop to a lieutenant, and stays to hear the prayer of a cornet, there was "so much of God in it." Become traditional, repeating the phrase without the spirit, reading the present backward as if it were written in Hebrew, translating Jehovah by "I was" instead of "I am," — it was no more like its former self than the hollow drum made of Zisca's skin was like the grim captain whose soul it had once contained. Yet the change was inevitable, for it is not safe to

confound the things of Cæsar with the things of God. Some honest republicans, like Ludlow, were never able to comprehend the chilling contrast between the ideal aim and the material fulfilment, and looked askance on the strenuous reign of Oliver, — that rugged boulder of primitive manhood lying lonely there on the dead level of the century, — as if some crooked changeling had been laid in the cradle instead of that fair babe of the Commonwealth they had dreamed. Truly there is a tide in the affairs of men, but there is no gulf-stream setting forever in one direction; and those waves of enthusiasm on whose crumbling crests we sometimes see nations lifted for a gleaming moment are wont to have a gloomy trough before and behind.

But the founders of New England, though they must have sympathized vividly with the struggles and triumphs of their brethren in the mother country, were never subjected to the same trials and temptations, never hampered with the same lumber of usages and tradition. They were not driven to win power by doubtful and desperate ways, nor to maintain it by any compromises of the ends which make it worth having. From the outset they were builders, without need of first pulling down, whether to make room or to provide material. For thirty years after the colonization of the Bay, they had absolute power to mould as they would the character of their adolescent commonwealth. During this time a whole generation would have grown to manhood who knew the Old World only by report, in whose habitual thought kings, nobles, and

bishops would be as far away from all present and practical concern as the figures in a fairy-tale, and all whose memories and associations, all their unconscious training by eye and ear, were New English wholly. Nor were the men whose influence was greatest in shaping the framework and the policy of the Colony, in any true sense of the word, fanatics. Enthusiasts, perhaps, they were, but with them the fermentation had never gone further than the ripeness of the vinous stage. Disappointment had never made it acetous, nor had it ever putrefied into the turbid zeal of Fifth Monarchism and sectarian whimsey. There is no better ballast for keeping the mind steady on its keel, and saving it from all risk of *crankiness*, than business. And they were business men, men of facts and figures no less than of religious earnestness. The sum of two hundred thousand pounds had been invested in their undertaking, — a sum, for that time, truly enormous as the result of private combination for a doubtful experiment. That their enterprise might succeed, they must show a balance on the right side of the counting-house ledger, as well as in their private accounts with their own souls. The liberty of praying when and how they would must be balanced with an ability of paying when and as they ought. Nor is the resulting fact in this case at variance with the *a priori* theory. They succeeded in making their thought the life and soul of a body politic, still powerful, still benignly operative, after two centuries; a thing which no mere fanatic ever did or ever will accomplish. Sober, earnest, and

thoughtful men, it was no Utopia, no New Atlantis, no realization of a splendid dream, which they had at heart, but the establishment of the divine principle of Authority on the common interest and the common consent; the making, by a contribution from the free-will of all, a power which should curb and guide the free-will of each for the general good. If they were stern in their dealings with sectaries, it should be remembered that the Colony was in fact the private property of the Massachusetts Company, that unity was essential to its success, and that John of Leyden had taught them how unendurable by the nostrils of honest men is the corruption of the right of private judgment in the evil and selfish hearts of men when no thorough mental training has developed the understanding and given the judgment its needful means of comparison and correction. They knew that liberty in the hands of feeble-minded and unreasoning persons (and all the worse if they are honest) means nothing more than the supremacy of their particular form of imbecility; means nothing less, therefore, than downright chaos, a Bedlam-chaos of monomaniacs and bores. What was to be done with men and women, who bore conclusive witness to the fall of man by insisting on walking up the broad-aisle of the meeting-house in a costume which that event had put forever out of fashion? About their treatment of witches, too, there has been a great deal of ignorant babble. Puritanism had nothing whatever to do with it. They acted under a delusion, which, with an exception here and there

(and those mainly medical men, like Wierus and Webster), darkened the understanding of all Christendom. Dr. Henry More was no Puritan; and his letter to Glanvil, prefixed to the third edition of the "Sadducismus Triumphatus," was written in 1678, only fourteen years before the trials at Salem. Bekker's "Bezauberte Welt" was published in 1693; and in the Preface he speaks of the difficulty of overcoming "the prejudices in which not only ordinary men, but the learned also, are obstinate." In Hathaway's case, 1702, Chief-Justice Holt, in charging the jury, expresses no disbelief in the possibility of witchcraft, and the indictment implies its existence. Indeed, the natural reaction from the Salem mania of 1692 put an end to belief in devilish compacts and demoniac possessions sooner in New England than elsewhere. The last we hear of it there is in 1720, when the Rev. Mr. Turell of Medford detected and exposed an attempted cheat by two girls. Even in 1692, it was the foolish breath of Cotton Mather and others of the clergy that blew the dying embers of this ghastly superstition into a flame; and they were actuated partly by a desire to bring about a religious revival, which might stay for a while the hastening lapse of their own authority, and still more by that credulous scepticism of feeble-minded piety which dreads the cutting away of an orthodox tumor of misbelief, as if the life-blood of faith would follow, and would keep even a stumbling-block in the way of salvation, if only enough generations had tripped over it to make it venerable.

The witches were condemned on precisely the same grounds that in our day led to the condemnation of "Essays and Reviews."

But Puritanism was already in the decline when such things were possible. What had been a wondrous and intimate experience of the soul, a flash into the very crypt and basis of man's nature from the fire of trial, had become ritual and tradition. In prosperous times the faith of one generation becomes the formality of the next. "The necessity of a reformation," set forth by order of the Synod which met at Cambridge in 1679, though no doubt overstating the case, shows how much even at that time the ancient strictness had been loosened. The country had grown rich, its commerce was large, and wealth did its natural work in making life softer and more worldly, commerce in deprovincializing the minds of those engaged in it. But Puritanism had already done its duty. As there are certain creatures whose whole being seems occupied with an egg-laying errand they are sent upon, incarnate ovipositors, their bodies but bags to hold this precious deposit, their legs of use only to carry them where they may most safely be rid of it, so sometimes a generation seems to have no other end than the conception and ripening of certain germs. Its blind stirrings, its apparently aimless seeking hither and thither, are but the driving of an instinct to be done with its parturient function toward these principles of future life and power. Puritanism, believing itself quick with the seed of reli-

gious liberty, laid, without knowing it, the egg of democracy. The English Puritans pulled down church and state to rebuild Zion on the ruins, and all the while it was not Zion, but America, they were building. But if their millennium went by, like the rest, and left men still human; if they, like so many saints and martyrs before them, listened in vain for the sound of that trumpet which was to summon all souls to a resurrection from the body of this death which men call life, — it is not for us, at least, to forget the heavy debt we owe them. It was the drums of Naseby and Dunbar that gathered the minute-men on Lexington Common; it was the red dint of the axe on Charles's block that marked One in our era. The Puritans had their faults. They were narrow, ungenial; they could not understand the text, "I have piped to you and ye have not danced," nor conceive that saving one's soul should be the cheerfullest, and not the dreariest, of businesses. Their preachers had a way, like the painful Mr. Perkins, of pronouncing the word *damn* with such an emphasis as left a doleful echo in their auditors' ears a good while after. And it was natural that men who captained or accompanied the exodus from existing forms and associations into the doubtful wilderness that led to the promised land, should find more to their purpose in the Old Testament than in the New. As respects the New England settlers, however visionary some of their religious tenets may have been, their political ideas savored of the realty, and it was no Nephelococcygia of

which they drew the plan, but of a commonwealth whose foundation was to rest on solid and familiar earth. If what they did was done in a corner, the results of it were to be felt to the ends of the earth; and the figure of Winthrop should be as venerable in history as that of Romulus is barbarously grand in legend.

I am inclined to think that many of our national characteristics, which are sometimes attributed to climate and sometimes to institutions, are traceable to the influences of Puritan descent. We are apt to forget how very large a proportion of our population is descended from emigrants who came over before 1660. Those emigrants were in great part representatives of that element of English character which was most susceptible of religious impressions; in other words, the most earnest and imaginative. Our people still differ from their English cousins (as they are fond of calling themselves when they are afraid we may do them a mischief) in a certain capacity for enthusiasm, a devotion to abstract principle, an openness to ideas, a greater aptness for intuitions than for the slow processes of the syllogism, and, as derivative from these, in minds of looser texture, a light-armed, skirmishing habit of thought, and a positive preference of the birds in the bush, — an excellent quality of character *before* you have your bird in the hand.

There have been two great distributing centres of the English race on this continent, Massachusetts and Virginia. Each has impressed the char-

acter of its early legislators on the swarms it has sent forth. Their ideas are in some fundamental respects the opposites of each other, and we can only account for it by an antagonism of thought beginning with the early framers of their respective institutions. New England abolished caste; in Virginia they still talk of "quality folks." But it was in making education not only common to all, but in some sense compulsory on all, that the destiny of the free republics of America was practically settled. Every man was to be trained, not only to the use of arms, but of his wits also; and it is these which alone make the others effective weapons for the maintenance of freedom. You may disarm the hands, but not the brains, of a people, and to know what should be defended is the first condition of successful defence. Simple as it seems, it was a great discovery that the key of knowledge could turn both ways, that it could open, as well as lock, the door of power to the many. The only things a New-Englander was ever locked out of were the jails. It is quite true that our Republic is the heir of the English Commonwealth; but as we trace events backward to their causes, we shall find it true also, that what made our Revolution a foregone conclusion was that act of the General Court, passed in May, 1647, which established the system of common schools. "To the end that learning may not be buried in the graves of our forefathers in Church and Commonwealth, the Lord assisting our endeavors, it is therefore ordered by this

Court and authority thereof, that every township in this jurisdiction, after the Lord hath increased them to fifty householders, shall then forthwith appoint one within their towns to teach all such children as shall resort to him to write and read."

Passing through some Massachusetts village, perhaps at a distance from any house, it may be in the midst of a piece of woods where four roads meet, one may sometimes even yet see a small square one-story building, whose use would not be long doubtful. It is summer, and the flickering shadows of forest-leaves dapple the roof of the little porch, whose door stands wide, and shows, hanging on either hand, rows of straw hats and bonnets, that look as if they had done good service. As you pass the open windows, you hear whole platoons of high-pitched voices discharging words of two or three syllables with wonderful precision and unanimity. Then there is a pause, and the voice of the officer in command is heard reproving some raw recruit whose vocal musket hung fire. Then the drill of the small infantry begins anew, but pauses again because some urchin — who agrees with Voltaire that the superfluous is a very necessary thing — insists on spelling "subtraction" with an *s* too much.

If you had the good fortune tc be born and bred in the Bay State, your mind is thronged with half-sad, half-humorous recollections. The a-b abs of little voices long since hushed in the mould, or ringing now in the pulpit, at the bar, or in the Senate-chamber, come back to the ear of memory. You

remember the high stool on which culprits used to be elevated with the tall paper fool's-cap on their heads, blushing to the ears; and you think with wonder how you have seen them since as men climbing the world's penance-stools of ambition without a blush, and gladly giving everything for life's caps and bells. And you have pleasanter memories of going after pond-lilies, of angling for horn-pouts, — that queer bat among the fishes, — of nutting, of walking over the creaking snow-crust in winter, when the warm breath of every household was curling up silently in the keen blue air. You wonder if life has any rewards more solid and permanent than the Spanish dollar that was hung around your neck to be restored again next day, and conclude sadly that it was but too true a prophecy and emblem of all worldly success. But your moralizing is broken short off by a rattle of feet and the pouring forth of the whole swarm, — the boys dancing and shouting, — the mere effervescence of the fixed air of youth and animal spirits uncorked, — the sedater girls in confidential twos and threes decanting secrets out of the mouth of one cape-bonnet into that of another. Times have changed since the jackets and trousers used to draw up on one side of the road, and the petticoats on the other, to salute with bow and curtsy the white neckcloth of the parson or the squire, if it chanced to pass during intermission.

Now this little building, and others like it, were an original kind of fortification invented by the founders of New England. They are the martello-

towers that protect our coast. This was the great discovery of our Puritan forefathers. They were the first lawgivers who saw clearly and enforced practically the simple moral and political truth, that knowledge was not an alms to be dependent on the chance charity of private men or the precarious pittance of a trust-fund, but a sacred debt which the Commonwealth owed to every one of her children. The opening of the first grammar-school was the opening of the first trench against monopoly in church and state; the first row of trammels and pot-hooks which the little Shearjashubs and Elkanahs blotted and blubbered across their copy-books, was the preamble to the Declaration of Independence. The men who gave every man the chance to become a landholder, who made the transfer of land easy, and put knowledge within the reach of all, have been called narrow-minded, because they were intolerant. But intolerant of what? Of what they believed to be dangerous nonsense, which, if left free, would destroy the last hope of civil and religious freedom. They had not come here that every man might do that which seemed good in his own eyes, but in the sight of God. Toleration, moreover, is something which is won, not granted. It is the equilibrium of neutralized forces. The Puritans had no notion of tolerating mischief. They looked upon their little commonwealth as upon their own private estate and homestead, as they had a right to do, and would no more allow the Devil's religion of unreason to be preached therein, than we should permit a prize-

fight in our gardens. They were narrow; in other words they had an edge to them, as men that serve in great emergencies must; for a Gordian knot is settled sooner with a sword than a beetle.

The founders of New England are commonly represented in the after-dinner oratory of their descendants as men "before their time," as it is called; in other words, deliberately prescient of events resulting from new relations of circumstances, or even from circumstances new in themselves, and therefore altogether alien from their own experience. Of course, such a class of men is to be reckoned among those non-existent human varieties so gravely catalogued by the ancient naturalists. If a man could shape his action with reference to what should happen a century after his death, surely it might be asked of him to call in the help of that easier foreknowledge which reaches from one day to the next, — a power of prophecy whereof we have no example. I do not object to a wholesome pride of ancestry, though a little mythical, if it be accompanied with the feeling that *noblesse oblige*, and do not result merely in a placid self-satisfaction with our own mediocrity, as if greatness, like righteousness, could be imputed. We can pardon it even in conquered races, like the Welsh and Irish, who make up to themselves for present degradation by imaginary empires in the past whose boundaries they can extend at will, carrying the bloodless conquests of fancy over regions laid down upon no map, and concerning which authentic history is enviously dumb. Those long

beadrolls of Keltic kings cannot tyrannize over us, and we can be patient so long as our own crowns are uncracked by the shillalah sceptres of their actual representatives. In our own case, it would not be amiss, perhaps, if we took warning by the example of Teague and Taffy. At least, I think it would be wise in our orators not to put forward so prominently the claim of the Yankee to universal dominion, and his intention to enter upon it forthwith. If we do our duties as honestly and as much in the fear of God as our forefathers did, we need not trouble ourselves much about other titles to empire. The broad foreheads and long heads will win the day at last in spite of all heraldry, and it will be enough if we feel as keenly as our Puritan founders did that those organs of empire may be broadened and lengthened by culture.[1] That our self-complacency should not increase the complacency of outsiders is not to be wondered at. As *we* sometimes take credit to ourselves (since all commendation of our ancestry is indirect self-flattery) for what the Puritan fathers never were, so there are others who, to gratify a spite against their descendants, blame them for not having been what they could not be; namely, before their time in such matters as slavery, witchcraft, and the like. The view, whether of friend or foe, is equally unhistorical, nay, without the faintest notion of all that makes history worth having as a

[1] It is curious, that, when Cromwell proposed to transfer a colony from New England to Ireland, one of the conditions insisted on in Massachusetts was that a college should be established.

teacher. That our grandfathers shared in the prejudices of their day is all that makes them human to us; and that nevertheless they could act bravely and wisely on occasion makes them only the more venerable. If certain barbarisms and superstitions disappeared earlier in New England than elsewhere, not by the decision of exceptionally enlightened or humane judges, but by force of public opinion, that is the fact that is interesting and instructive for us. I never thought it an abatement of Hawthorne's genius that he came lineally from one who sat in judgment on the witches in 1692; it was interesting rather to trace something hereditary in the sombre character of his imagination, continually vexing itself to account for the origin of evil, and baffled for want of that simple solution in a personal Devil.

But I have no desire to discuss the merits or demerits of the Puritans, having long ago learned the wisdom of saving my sympathy for more modern objects than Hecuba. My object is to direct the attention of my readers to a collection of documents where they may see those worthies as they were in their daily living and thinking. The collections of our various historical and antiquarian societies can hardly be said to be *published* in the strict sense of the word, and few consequently are aware how much they contain of interest for the general reader no less than the special student. The several volumes of "Winthrop Papers," in especial, are a mine of entertainment. Here we have the Puritans painted by themselves, and,

while we arrive at a truer notion of the characters of some among them, and may accordingly sacrifice to that dreadful superstition of being usefully employed which makes so many bores and bored, we can also furtively enjoy the oddities of thought and speech, the humors of the time, which our local historians are too apt too despise as inconsidered trifles. For myself I confess myself heretic to the established theory of the gravity of history, and am not displeased with an opportunity to smile behind my hand at any ludicrous interruption of that sometimes wearisome ceremonial. I am not sure that I would not sooner give up Raleigh spreading his cloak to keep the royal Dian's feet from the mud, than that awful judgment upon the courtier whose Atlantean thighs leaked away in bran through the rent in his trunk-hose. The painful fact that Fisher had his head cut off is somewhat mitigated to me by the circumstance that the Pope should have sent him, of all things in the world, a cardinal's hat after that incapacitation. Theology herself becomes less unamiable to me when I find the Supreme Pontiff writing to the Council of Trent that "they should begin with original sin, *maintaining yet a due respect for the Emperor.*" That infallibility should thus curtsy to decorum, shall make me think better of it while I live. I shall accordingly endeavor to give my readers what amusement I can, leaving it to themselves to extract solid improvement from the volumes before us, which include a part of the correspondence of three generations of Winthrops.

Let me premise that there are two men above all others for whom our respect is heightened by these letters, — the elder John Winthrop and Roger Williams. Winthrop appears throughout as a truly magnanimous and noble man in an unobtrusive way, — a kind of greatness that makes less noise in the world, but is on the whole more solidly satisfying than most others, — a man who has been dipped in the river of God (a surer baptism than Styx or dragon's blood) till his character is of perfect proof, and who appears plainly as the very soul and life of the young Colony. Very reverend and godly he truly was, and a respect not merely ceremonious, but personal, a respect that savors of love, shows itself in the letters addressed to him. Charity and tolerance flow so naturally from the pen of Williams that it is plain they were in his heart. He does not show himself a very strong or very wise man, but a thoroughly gentle and good one. His affection for the two Winthrops is evidently of the warmest. We suspect that he lived to see that there was more reason in the drum-head religious discipline which made him, against his will, the founder of a commonwealth, than he may have thought at first. But for the fanaticism (as it is the fashion to call the sagacious straitness) of the abler men who knew how to root the English stock firmly in this new soil on either side of him, his little plantation could never have existed, and he himself would have been remembered only, if at all, as one of the jarring atoms in a chaos of otherwise-mindedness.

Two other men, Emanuel Downing and Hugh Peter, leave a positively unpleasant savor in the nostrils. Each is selfish in his own way, — Downing with the shrewdness of an attorney, Peter with that clerical unction which in a vulgar nature so easily degenerates into greasiness. Neither of them was the man for a forlorn hope, and both returned to England when the civil war opened prospect of preferment there. Both, we suspect, were inclined to value their Puritanism for its rewards in this world rather than the next. Downing's son, Sir George, was basely prosperous, making the good cause pay him so long as it was solvent, and then selling out in season to betray his old commander, Colonel Okey, to the shambles at Charing Cross. Peter became a colonel in the Parliament's army, and under the Protectorate one of Cromwell's chaplains. On his trial, after the Restoration, he made a poor figure, in striking contrast to some of the brave men who suffered with him. At his execution a shocking brutality was shown. "When Mr. Cook was cut down and brought to be quartered, one they called Colonel Turner calling to the Sheriff's men to bring Mr. Peters near, that he might see it; and by and by the Hangman came to him all besmeared in blood, and rubbing his bloody hands together, he tauntingly asked, *Come, how do you like this, Mr. Peters? How do you like this work?*"[1] This Colonel Turner

[1] *State Trials*, ii. 409. One would not reckon too closely with a man on trial for his life, but there is something pitiful in Peter's representing himself as coming back to England "out of

can hardly have been other than the one who four years later came to the hangman's hands for robbery; and whose behavior, both in the dock and at the gallows, makes his trial one of the most entertaining as a display of character. Peter would seem to have been one of those men gifted with what is sometimes called eloquence; that is, the faculty of stating things powerfully from momentary feeling, and not from that conviction of the higher reason which alone can give force and permanence to words. His letters show him subject, like others of like temperament, to fits of "hypochondriacal melancholy," and the only witness he called on his trial was to prove that he was confined to his lodgings by such an attack on the day of the king's beheading. He seems to have been subject to this malady at convenience, as some women to hysterics. Honest John Endicott plainly had small confidence in him, and did not think him the right man to represent the Colony in England. There is a droll resolve in the Massachusetts records by which he is "desired to write to Holland for 500*l.* worth of *peter*, & 40*l.* worth of match." It is with a match that we find him burning his fingers in the present correspondence.

Peter seems to have entangled himself somehow with a Mrs. Deliverance Sheffield, whether maid or widow nowhere appears, but presumably the latter. The following statement of his position is amusing enough: "I have sent Mrs. D. Sh. letter,

the West Indias," in order to evade any complicity with suspected New England.

which puts mee to new troubles, for though shee takes liberty upon my Cossen Downing's speeches, yet (Good Sir) let mee not be a foole in Israel. I had many good answers to yesterday's worke [a Fast] and amongst the rest her letter; which (if her owne) doth argue more wisedome than I thought shee had. You have often sayd I could not leave her; what to doe is very considerable. Could I with comfort & credit desist, this seemes best: could I goe on & content myselfe, that were good. . . . For though I now seeme free agayne, yet the depth I know not. Had shee come over with me, I thinke I had bin quieter. This shee may know, that I have sought God earnestly, that the nexte weeke I shall bee riper: — I doubt shee gaynes most by such writings: & shee deserves most where shee is further of. If you shall amongst you advise mee to write to hir, I shall forthwith; our towne lookes upon mee contracted & so I have sayd myselfe; what wonder the charge [change ?] would make, I know not." Again: "Still pardon my offensive boldnes: I know not well whither Mrs. Sh. have set mee at liberty or not: my conclusion is, that if you find I cannot make an honorable retreat, then I shall desire to advance σὺν Θεῷ. Of you I now expect your last advise, viz: whither I must goe on or of, *saluo evangelij honore:* if shee bee in good earnest to leave all agitations this way, then I stand still & wayt God's mind concerning mee. . . . If I had much mony I would part with it to her [be?] free, till wee heare what England doth, supposing I may bee called to some im-

ployment that will not suit a marryed estate": (here another mode of escape presents itself, and he goes on:) "for indeed (Sir) some must looke out & I have very strong thoughts to speake with the Duitch Governor & lay some way there for a supply &c." At the end of the letter, an objection to the lady herself occurs to him: "Once more for Mrs. Sh: I had from Mr. Hibbins & others, her fellowpassengers, sad discouragements where they saw her in her trim. I would not come of with dishonor, nor come on with griefe, or ominous hesitations." On all this shilly-shally we have a shrewd comment in a letter of Endicott: "I cannot but acquaint you with my thoughts concerning Mr. Peter since hee receaued a letter from Mrs. Sheffield, which was yesterday in the eveninge after the Fast, shee seeming in her letter to abate of her affeccions towards him & dislikinge to come to Salem vppon such termes as he had written. I finde now that hee begins to play her parte, & if I mistake not, you will see him as greatly in loue with her (if shee will but hold of a little) as euer shee was with him; but he conceales it what he can as yett. The begininge of the next weeke you will heare further from him." The widow was evidently more than a match for poor Peter.

It should appear that a part of his trouble arose from his having coquetted also with a certain Mrs. Ruth, about whom he was "dealt with by Mrs. Amee, Mr. Phillips & 2 more of the Church, our Elder being one. When Mr. Phillips with much violence & sharpnes charged mee home . . . that

I should hinder the mayd of a match at London, which was not so, could not thinke of any kindnes I euer did her, though shee haue had above 300*li.* through my fingers, so as if God uphold me not after an especiall manner, it will sinke me surely . . . hee told me he would not stop my intended marriage, but assured mee it would not bee good . . . all which makes mee reflect upon my rash proceedings with Mrs. Sh." Panurge's doubts and difficulties about matrimony were not more entertainingly contradictory. Of course, Peter ends by marrying the widow, and presently we have a comment on "her trim." In January, 1639, he writes to Winthrop: "My wife is very thankfull for her apples, & *desires much the new fashioned shooes.*" Eight years later we find him writing from England, where he had been two years: "I am coming over if I must; my wife comes of necessity to New England, having run her selfe out of breath here"; and then in the postscript, "bee sure you never let my wife come away from thence without my leave, & then you love mee." But life is never pure comedy, and the end in this case is tragical. Roger Williams, after his return from England in 1654, writes to John Winthrop, Jr.: "Your brother flourisheth in good esteeme & is eminent for maintaining the Freedome of the Conscience as to matters of Beliefe, Religion, & Worship. Your Father Peters preacheth the same Doctrine though not so zealously as some years since, yet cries out against New English Rigidities & Persecutions, their civil injuries & wrongs to

himselfe, & their unchristian dealing with him in excommunicating his distracted wife. All this he tould me in his lodgings at Whitehall, those lodgings which I was tould were Canterburies [the Archbishop], but he himselfe tould me that that Library wherein we were together was Canterburies & given him by the Parliament. His wife lives from him, not wholy but much distracted. He tells me he had but 200 a yeare & he allowed her 4 score per annum of it. Surely, Sir, the most holy Lord is most wise in all the trialls he exerciseth his people with. He tould me that his affliction from his wife stird him up to Action abroad, & when successe tempted him to Pride, the Bitternes in his bozome-comforts was a Cooler & a Bridle to him." Truly the whirligig of time brings about strange revenges. Peter had been driven from England by the persecutions of Laud; a few years later he "stood armed on the scaffold" when that prelate was beheaded, and now we find him installed in the archiepiscopal lodgings. Dr. Palfrey, it appears to me, gives altogether too favorable an opinion both of Peter's character and abilities. I conceive him to have been a vain and selfish man. He may have had the bravery of passionate impulse, but he wanted that steady courage of character which has such a beautiful constancy in Winthrop. He always professed a longing to come back to New England, but it was only a way he had of talking. That he never meant to come is plain from these letters. Nay, when things looked prosperous in England, he

writes to the younger Winthrop: "My counsell is you should come hither with your family for certaynly you will bee capable of a comfortable living in this free Commonwealth. I doo seriously advise it. . . . G. Downing is worth 500*l.* per annum but 4*l.* per diem — your brother Stephen worth 2000*l.* & a maior. I pray come." But when he is snugly ensconced in Whitehall, and may be presumed to have some influence with the prevailing powers, his zeal cools. "I wish you & all friends to stay there & rather looke to the West Indyes if they remoue, for many are here to seeke when they come ouer." To me Peter's highest promotion seems to have been that he walked with John Milton at the Protector's funeral. He was, I suspect, one of those men, to borrow a charitable phrase of Roger Williams, who "feared God in the main," that is, whenever it was not personally inconvenient. William Coddington saw him in his glory in 1651: "Soe wee toucke the tyme to goe to viset Mr. Petters at his chamber. I was mery with him & called him the Arch. Bp.: of Canterberye, in regard to his adtendance by ministers & gentlemen, & it passed very well." Considering certain charges brought against Peter, (though he is said, when under sentence of death, to have denied the truth of them,) Coddington's statement that he liked to have "gentlewomen waite of him" in his lodgings has not a pleasant look. One last report of him we get (September, 1659) in a letter of John Davenport, — "that Mr. Hugh Peters is distracted & under sore horrors of conscience, cry-

ing out of himselfe as damned & confessing haynous actings."

Occasionally these letters give us interesting glimpses of persons and things in England. In the letter of Williams just cited, there is a lesson for all parties raised to power by exceptional causes. "Surely, Sir, youre Father & all the people of God in England . . . are now in the sadle & at the helme, so high that *non datus descensus nisi cadendo:* Some cheere up their spirits with the impossibilitie of another fall or turne, so doth Major G. Harrison . . . a very gallant most deserving heavenly man, but most highflowne for the Kingdom of the Saints & the 5th Monarchie now risen & their sun never to set againe &c. Others, as, to my knowledge, the Protector . . . are not so full of that faith of miracles, but still imagine changes & persecutions & the very slaughter of the witnesses before that glorious morning so much desired of a worldly Kingdome, if ever such a Kingdome (as literally it is by so many expounded) be to arise in this present world & dispensation." Poor General Harrison lived to be one of the witnesses so slaughtered. The practical good sense of Cromwell is worth noting, the English understanding struggling against Judaic trammels. Williams gives us another peep through the keyhole of the past: "It pleased the Lord to call me for some time & with some persons to practice the Hebrew, the Greeke, Latine, French & Dutch. The secretarie of the Councell (Mr. Milton) for my Dutch I read him, read me many more languages. Gram-

mar rules begin to be esteemed a Tyrannie. I taught 2 young Gentlemen, a Parliament man's sons, as we teach our children English, by words, phrazes, & constant talke, &c." It is plain that Milton had talked over with Williams the theory put forth in his tract on Education, (it was Montaigne's also) and made a convert of him. We could wish that the good Baptist had gone a little more into particulars. But which of us knows among the men he meets whom time will dignify by curtailing him of the "Mr.," and reducing him to a bare patronymic, as being a kind by himself? We have a glance or two at Oliver, who is always interesting. "The late renowned Oliver confest to me in close discourse about the Protestants affaires &c. that he yet feard great persecutions to the protestants from the Romanists before the downfall of the Papacie," writes Williams in 1660. This "close discourse" must have been six years before, when Williams was in England. Within a year after, Oliver interfered to some purpose in behalf of the Protestants of Piedmont, and Mr. Milton wrote his famous sonnet. Of the war with Spain, Williams reports from his letters out of England in 1656: "This diversion against the Spaniard hath turnd the face & thoughts of many English, so that the saying now is, Crowne the Protector with gould,[1] though the sullen yet cry, Crowne him with thornes."

Again in 1654: "I know the Protector had strong thoughts of Hispaniola & Cuba. Mr. Cot-

[1] Waller put this into verse: —

"Let the rich ore forthwith be melted down
And the state fixed by making him a crown."

ton's interpreting of Euphrates to be the West Indies, the supply of gold (to take off taxes), & the provision of a warmer *diverticulum & receptaculum* then N. England is, will make a footing into those parts very precious, & if it shall please God to vouchsafe successe to this fleete, I looke to hear of an invitation at least to these parts for removall from his Highnes who lookes on N. E. only with an eye of pitie, as poore, cold & useless." The mixture of Euphrates and taxes, of the transcendental and practical, prophecy taking precedence of thrift, is characteristic, and recalls Cromwell's famous rule, of fearing God *and* keeping your powder dry. In one of the Protector's speeches,[1] he insists much on his wish to retire to a private life. There is a curious confirmation of his sincerity in a letter of William Hooke, then belonging to his household, dated the 13th of April, 1657. The question of the kingly title was then under debate, and Hooke's account of the matter helps to a clearer understanding of the reasons for Cromwell's refusing the title: "The protector is urged *utrinque* & (I am ready to think) willing enough to betake himself to a private life, if it might be. He is a godly man, much in prayer & good discourses, delighting in good men & good ministers, self-denying & ready to promote any good work for Christ."[2] On the 5th of February, $165\frac{4}{5}$, Captain John Mason, of Pequot memory, writes "a word or twoe of newes as it comes from Mr. Eaton, viz: that the

[1] The *third* in Carlyle, 1654.

[2] *Collections Mass. Hist. Soc.*, Third Series, vol. i. p. 182.

Parliament sate in September last; they chose their old Speaker & Clarke. The Protectour told them they were a free Parliament, & soe left them that day. They, considering where the legislative power resided, concluded to vote it on the morrow, & to take charge of the militia. The Protectour hereing of it, sent for some numbers of horse, went to the Parliament House, nayld up the doores, sent for them to the Painted Chamber, told them they should attend the lawes established, & that he would wallow in his blood before he would part with what was conferd upon him, tendering them an oath: 140 engaged." Now it is curious that Mr. Eaton himself, from whom Mason got his news, wrote, only two days before, an account, differing, in some particulars, and especially in tone, from Mason's. Of the speech he says, that it "gave such satisfaction that about 200 have since ingaged to owne the present Government." Yet Carlyle gives the same number of signers (140) as Mason, and there is a sentence in Cromwell's speech, as reported by Carlyle, of precisely the same purport as that quoted by Mason. To me, that "wallow in my blood" has rather more of the Cromwellian ring in it, more of the quality of spontaneous speech, than the "rolled into my grave and buried with infamy" of the official reporter. John Haynes (24th July, 1653) reports "newes from England of astonishing nature," concerning the dissolution of the Rump. We quote his story both as a contemporaneous version of the event, and as containing some particulars that explain the causes

that led to it. It differs, in some respects, from Carlyle, and is hardly less vivid as a picture: "The Parliament of England & Councell of State are both dissolved, by whom & the manner this: The Lord Cromwell, Generall, went to the house & asked the Speaker & Bradshaw by what power they sate ther. They answered by the same power that he woare his sword. Hee replied they should know they did not, & said they should sitt noe longer, demanding an account of the vast sommes of money they had received of the Commons. They said the matter was of great consequence & they would give him accompt in tenn dayes. He said, Noe, they had sate too long already (& might now take their ease,) for ther inriching themselves & impoverishing the Commons, & then seazed uppon all the Records. Immediatly Lambert, Livetenant Generall, & Hareson Maior Generall (for they two were with him), tooke the Speaker Lenthall by the hands, lift him out of the Chaire, & ledd him out of the house, & commanded the rest to depart, which fortwith was obeied, & the Generall took the keyes & locked the doore." He then goes on to give the reasons assigned by different persons for the act. Some said that the General "scented their purpose" to declare themselves perpetual, and to get rid of him by ordering him to Scotland. "Others say this, that the cries of the oppressed preveiled much with him . . . & hastned the declaracion of that ould principle, *Salus populi suprema lex* &c." The General, in the heat of his wrath, himself snatching the keys and lock-

ing the door, has a look of being drawn from the life. Cromwell, in a letter to General Fortescue (November, 1655), speaks sharply of the disorders and debauchedness, profaneness and wickedness, commonly practised amongst the army sent out to the West Indies. Major Mason gives us a specimen: "It is heere reported that some of the soldiers belonging to the ffleet at Boston, ffell upon the watch: after some bickering they comanded them to goe before the Governour; they retorned that they were Cromwell's boyes." Have we not, in these days, heard of "Sherman's boys"?

Belonging properly to the "Winthrop Papers," but printed in an earlier volume (Third Series, vol. i. pp. 185–198), is a letter of John Maidstone, which contains the best summary of the Civil War that I ever read. Indeed, it gives a clearer insight into its causes, and a better view of the vicissitudes of the Commonwealth and Protectorate, than any one of the more elaborate histories. There is a singular equity and absence of party passion in it which gives us faith in the author's judgment. He was Oliver's Steward of the Household, and his portrait of him, as that of an eminently fair-minded man who knew him well, is of great value. Carlyle has not copied it, and, as many of my readers may never have seen it, I reproduce it here: "Before I pass further, pardon me in troubling you with the character of his person, which, by reason of my nearness to him, I had opportunity well to observe. His body was well compact and strong; his stature under six feet,

(I believe about two inches;) his head so shaped as you might see it a store-house and shop both, of a vast treasury of natural parts. His temper exceeding fiery, as I have known, but the flame of it kept down for the most part or soon allayed with those moral endowments he had. He was naturally compassionate towards objects in distress, even to an effeminate measure; though God had made him a heart wherein was left little room for any fear but what was due to himself, of which there was a large proportion, yet did he exceed in tenderness toward sufferers. A larger soul, I think, hath seldom dwelt in a house of clay than his was. I do believe, if his story were impartially transmitted, and the unprejudiced world well possessed with it, she would add him to her nine worthies and make that number a *decemviri*. He lived and died in comfortable communion with God, as judicious persons near him well observed. He was that Mordecai that sought the welfare of his people and spake peace to his seed. Yet were his temptations such, as it appeared frequently that he that hath grace enough for many men may have too little for himself, the treasure he had being but in an earthen vessel and that equally defiled with original sin as any other man's nature is." There are phrases here that may be matched with the choicest in the life of Agricola; and, indeed, the whole letter, superior to Tacitus in judicial fairness of tone, goes abreast of his best writing in condensation, nay, surpasses it in this, that, while in Tacitus the intensity is of temper, here it is

the clear residuum left by the ferment and settling of thought. Just before, speaking of the dissolution of Oliver's last Parliament, Maidstone says: "That was the last which sat during his life, he being compelled to wrestle with the difficulties of his place so well as he could without parliamentary assistance, and in it met with so great a burthen as (I doubt not to say) it drank up his spirits, of which his natural constitution yielded a vast stock, and brought him to his grave, his interment being the seed-time of his glory and England's calamity." Hooke, in a letter of April 16, 1658, has a passage worth quoting: "The dissolucion of the last Parliament puts the supreme powers upon difficulties, though the trueth is the Nacion is so ill spirited that little good is to be expected from these Generall Assemblies. They [the supreme powers, to wit, Cromwell] have been much in Counsell since this disappointment, & God hath been sought by them in the effectuall sense of the need of help from heaven & of the extreme danger impendent on a miscarriage of their advises. But our expences are so vast that I know not how they can avoyde a recurrence to another Session & to make a further tryall. . . . The land is full of discontents, & the Cavaleerish party doth still expect a day & nourish hopes of a Revolucion. The Quakers do still proceed & are not yet come to their period. The Presbyterians do abound, I thinke, more than ever, & are very bold & confident because some of their masterpieces lye unanswered, particularly theire *Jus Divinum Regi-*

minis Ecclesiastici which I have sent to Mr. Davenporte. It hath been extant without answer these many years [only four, brother Hooke, if we may trust the title-page]. The Anabaptists abound likewise, & Mr. Tombes hath pretended to have answered all the bookes extant against his opinion. I saw him presenting it to the Protectour of late. The Episcopall men ply the Common-Prayer booke with much more boldness then ever since these turnes of things, even in the open face of the City in severall places. I have spoken of it to the Protectour but as yet nothing is done in order to their being suppressed." It should teach us to distrust the apparent size of objects, which is a mere cheat of their nearness to us, that we are so often reminded of how small account things seem to one generation for which another was ready to die. A copy of the *Jus Divinum* held too close to the eyes could shut out the universe with its infinite chances and changes, its splendid indifference to our ephemeral fates. Cromwell, we should gather, had found out the secret of this historical perspective, to distinguish between the blaze of a burning tar-barrel and the final conflagration of all things. He had learned tolerance by the possession of power, — a proof of his capacity for rule. In 1652 Haynes writes: "Ther was a Catechise lately in print ther, that denied the divinity of Christ, yett ther was motions in the house by some, to have it lycenced by authority. Cromwell mainly oposed, & at last it was voted to bee burnt which causes much discontent of somme." Six years had made Cromwell wiser.

One more extract from a letter of Hooke's (30th March, 1659) is worth giving. After speaking of Oliver's death, he goes on to say: "Many prayers were put up solemnly for his life, & some, of great & good note, were too confident that he would not die. . . . I suppose himselfe had thoughts that he should have outlived this sickness till near his dissolution, perhaps a day or two before; which I collect partly by some words which he was said to speak . . . & partly from his delaying, almost to the last, to nominate his successor, to the wonderment of many who began sooner to despair of his life. . . . His eldest son succeedeth him, being chosen by the Council, the day following his father's death, whereof he had no expectation. I have heard him say he had thought to have lived as a country gentleman, & that his father had not employed him in such a way as to prepare him for such employment; which, he thought, he did designedly. I suppose his meaning was lest it should have been apprehended he had prepared & appointed him for such a place, the burthen whereof I have several times heard him complaining under since his coming to the Government, the weighty occasions whereof with continuall oppressing cares had drunk up his father's spirits, in whose body very little blood was found when he was opened: the greatest defect visible was in his heart, which was flaccid & shrunk together. Yet he was one that could bear much without complaining, as one of a strong constitution of brain (as appeared when he was dissected) & likewise of body. His son

seemeth to be of another frame, soft & tender, & penetrable with easier cares by much, yet he is of a sweete countenance, vivacious & candid, as is the whole frame of his spirit, only naturally inclined to choler. His reception of multitudes of addresses from towns, cities, & counties doth declare, among several other indiciums, more of ability in him than could, ordinarily, have been expected from him. He spake also with general acceptation & applause when he made his speech before the Parliament, even far beyond the Lord Fynes.[1] . . . If this Assembly miss it, we are like to be in an ill condition. The old ways & customs of England, as to worshipe, are in the hearts of the most, who long to see the days again which once they saw. . . . The hearts of very many are for the house of the Stewarts, & there is a speech as if they would attempt to call the late King's judges into question. . . . The city, I hear is full of Cavaliers." Poor Richard appears to have inherited little of his father but the inclination to choler. That he could speak far beyond the Lord Fynes seems to have been not much to the purpose. Rhetoric was not precisely the medicine for such a case as he had to deal with. Such were the glimpses which the New England had of the Old. Ishmael must erelong learn to shift for himself.

The temperance question agitated the fathers very much as it still does the children. We have never seen the anti-prohibition argument stated more cogently than in a letter of Thomas Shepard,

[1] This speech may be found in the Annual Register of 1762.

minister of Cambridge, to Winthrop, in 1639: "This also I doe humbly intreat, that there may be no sin made of *drinking in any case one to another*, for I am confident he that stands here will fall & be beat from his grounds by his own arguments; as also that the consequences will be very sad, and the thing provoking to God & man to make more sins than (as yet is seene) God himself hath made." A principle as wise now as it was then. Our ancestors were also harassed as much as we by the difficulties of domestic service. In a country where land might be had for the asking, it was not easy to keep hold of servants brought over from England. Emanuel Downing, always the hard, practical man, would find a remedy in negro slavery. "A warr with the Narraganset," he writes to Winthrop in 1645, "is verie considerable to this plantation, ffor I doubt whither it be not synne in us, having power in our hands, to suffer them to maynteyne the worship of the devill which their pawwawes often doe; 2lie, If upon a just warre the Lord should deliver them into our hands, wee might easily have men, woemen, & children enough to exchange for Moores, which wilbe more gaynefull pilladge for us than wee conceive, for I doe not see how wee can thrive untill wee gett into a stock of slaves sufficient to doe all our buisenes, for our childrens children will hardly see this great Continent filled with people, soe that our servants will still desire freedome to plant for them selves, & not stay but for verie great wages. And I suppose you know verie well

how wee shall maynteyne 20 Moores cheaper than one Englishe servant." The doubt whether it be not sin in us longer to tolerate their devil-worship, considering how much need we have of them as merchandise, is delicious. The way in which Hugh Peter grades the sharp descent from the apostolic to the practical with an *et cetera*, in the following extract, has the same charm: "Sir, Mr. Endecot & myself salute you in the Lord Jesus &c. Wee have heard of a dividence of women & children in the bay & would bee glad of a share viz: a young woman or girle & a boy if you thinke good." Peter seems to have got what he asked for, and to have been worse off than before; for we find him writing two years later: "My wife desires my daughter to send to Hanna that was her mayd, now at Charltowne, to know if shee would dwell with us, for truly wee are so destitute (having now but an Indian) that wee know not what to doe." Let any housewife of our day, who does not find the Keltic element in domestic life so refreshing as to Mr. Arnold in literature, imagine a household with one wild Pequot woman, communicated with by signs, for its maid of all work, and take courage. Those were serious times indeed, when your cook might give warning by taking your scalp, or *chignon*, as the case might be, and making off with it into the woods. The fewness and dearness of servants made it necessary to call in temporary assistance for extraordinary occasions, and hence arose the common use of the word *help*. As the great majority kept no servants at all, and yet were liable to need them

for work to which the family did not suffice, as, for instance, in harvest, the use of the word was naturally extended to all kinds of service. That it did not have its origin in any false shame at the condition itself, induced by democratic habits, is plain from the fact that it came into use while the word *servant* had a much wider application than now, and certainly implied no social stigma. Downing and Hooke, each at different times, one of them so late as 1667, wished to place a son as "servant" with one of the Winthrops. Roger Williams writes of his daughter, that "she desires to spend some time in service & liked much Mrs. Brenton, who wanted." This was, no doubt, in order to be well drilled in housekeeping, an example which might be followed still to advantage. John Tinker, himself the "servant" or steward of the second Winthrop, makes use of *help* in both the senses we have mentioned, and shows the transition of the word from its restricted to its more general application. "We have fallen a pretty deal of timber & drawn some by Goodman Rogers's team, but unless your worship have a good team of your own & a man to go with them, I shall be much distracted for *help* . . . & when our business is most in haste we shall be most to seek." Again, writing at harvest, as appears both by the date and by an elaborate pun, — "I received the *sithes* you sent but in that there came not also yourself, it maketh me to *sigth*," — he says: "*Help* is scarce and hard to get, difficult to please, uncertain, &c. Means runneth out & wages on & I cannot make choice of my *help*."

It may be some consolation to know that the complaint of a decline in the quality of servants is no modern thing. Shakespeare makes Orlando say to Adam:

> "O, good old man, how well in thee appears
> The constant service of the antique world,
> When service sweat for duty, not for meed!
> Thou art not of the fashion of these times,
> When none will sweat but for promotion."

When the faithful old servant is brought upon the stage, we may be sure he was getting rare. A century later, we have explicit testimony that things were as bad in this respect as they are now. Don Manuel Gonzales, who travelled in England in 1730, says of London servants: "As to common menial servants, they have great wages, are well kept and cloathed, but are notwithstanding the plague of almost every house in town. They form themselves into societies or rather confederacies, contributing to the maintenance of each other when out of place, and if any of them cannot manage the family where they are entertained, as they please, immediately they give notice they will be gone. There is no speaking to them, they are above correction, and if a master should attempt it, he may expect to be handsomely drubbed by the creature he feeds and harbors, or perhaps an action brought against him for it. It is become a common saying, *If my servant ben't a thief, if he be but honest, I can bear with other things.* And indeed it is very rare in London to meet with an honest servant." [1]

[1] *Collection of Voyages, &c.*, from the Library of the Earl of Oxford, vol. i. p. 151.

Southey writes to his daughter Edith, in 1824, "All the maids eloped because I had turned a man out of the kitchen at eleven o'clock on the preceding night." Nay, Hugh Rhodes, in his *Boke of Nurture* (1577), speaks of servants "ofte fleeting," i. e. leaving one master for another.

One of the most curious things revealed to us in these volumes is the fact that John Winthrop, Jr., was seeking the philosopher's stone, that universal elixir which could transmute all things to its own substance. This is plain from the correspondence of Edward Howes. Howes goes to a certain doctor, professedly to consult him about the method of making a cement for earthen vessels, no doubt crucibles. His account of him is amusing, and reminds one of Ben Jonson's Subtle. This was one of the many quacks who gulled men during that twilight through which alchemy was passing into chemistry. "This Dr, for a Dr he is, brags that if he have but the hint or notice of any useful thing not yet invented, he will undertake to find it out, except some few which he hath vowed not to meddle with as *vitrum maliabile, perpet. motus, via proxima ad Indos & lapis philosi:* all, or anything else he will undertake, but for his private gain, to make a monopoly thereof & to sell the use or knowledge thereof at too high rates." This breed of pedlers in science is not yet extinct. The exceptions made by the Doctor show a becoming modesty. Again: "I have been 2 or 3 times with the Dr & can get but small satisfaction about your queries. . . .

Yet I must confess he seemed very free to me, only in the main he was mystical. This he said, that when the will of God is you shall know what you desire, it will come with such a light that it will make a harmony among all your authors, causing them sweetly to agree, & put you forever out of doubt & question." In another letter: "I cannot discover into *terram incognitam*, but I have had a ken of it showed unto me. The way to it is, for the most part, horrible & fearful, the dangers none worse, to them that are *destinati filii:* sometimes I am travelling that way. . . . I think I have spoken with some that have been there."

Howes writes very cautiously: "Dear friend, I desire with all my heart that I might write plainer to you, but in discovering the mystery, I may diminish its majesty & give occasion to the profane to abuse it, if it should fall into unworthy hands." By and by he begins to think his first doctor a humbug, but he finds a better. Howes was evidently a man of imaginative temper, fit to be captivated by the alchemistic theory of the unity of composition in nature, which was so attractive to Goethe. Perhaps the great poet was himself led to it by his Rosicrucian studies when writing the first part of Faust. Howes tells his friend that "there is all good to be found in unity, & all evil in duality & multiplicity. *Phœnix illa admiranda sola semper existit*, therefore while a man & she is two, he shall never see her," — a truth of very wide application, and too often lost sight of or never seen at all. "The Arabian Phi-

los. I writ to you of, he was styled among us Dr. Lyon, the best of all the Rosicrucians[1] that ever I met withal, far beyond Dr. Ewer: they that are of his strain are knowing men; they pretend [i. e. claim] to live in free light, they honor God & do good to the people among whom they live, & I conceive you are in the right that they had their learning from Arabia."

Howes is a very interesting person, a mystic of the purest kind, and that while learning to be an attorney with Emanuel Downing. How little that perfunctory person dreamed of what was going on under his nose, — as little as of the spiritual wonders that lay beyond the tip of it! Howes was a Swedenborgian before Swedenborg. Take this, for example: "But to our sympathetical business whereby we may communicate our minds one to another though the diameter of the earth interpose. *Diana non est centrum omnium.* I would have you so good a geometrician as to know your own centre. Did you ever yet measure your everlasting self, the length of your life, the breadth of your love, the depth of your wisdom & the height of your light? Let Truth be your centre, & you may do it, otherways not. I could wish you would now begin to leave off being altogether an outward man; this is but *casa Regentis*; the Ruler can draw you straight lines from your centre to the confines of an infinite circumference, by which you may pass from any part of the circumference to another without obstacle

[1] Howes writes the word symbolically.

of earth or secation of lines, if you observe & keep but one & the true & only centre, to pass by it, from it, & to it. Methinks I now see you *intus et extra* & talk to you, but you mind me not because you are from home, you are not within, you look as if you were careless of yourself; your hand & your voice differ; 't is my friend's hand, I know it well; but the voice is your enemy's. O, my friend, if you love me, get you home, get you in! You have a friend as well as an enemy. Know them by their voices. The one is still driving or enticing you out; the other would have you stay within. Be within and keep within, & all that are within & keep within shall you see know & communicate with to the full, & shall not need to strain your outward senses to see & hear that which is like themselves uncertain & too-too often false, but, abiding forever within, in the centre of Truth, from thence you may behold & understand the innumerable divers emanations within the circumference, & still within; for without are falsities, lies, untruths, dogs &c." Howes was tolerant also, not from want of faith, but from depth of it. "The relation of your fight with the Indians I have read in print, but of the fight among yourselves, *bellum linguarum* the strife of tongues, I have heard much, but little to the purpose. I wonder your people, that pretend to know so much, doe not know that love is the fulfilling of the law, & that against love there is no law." Howes forgot that what might cause only a ripple in London might overwhelm the tiny Colony

in Boston. Two years later, he writes more philosophically, and perhaps with a gentle irony, concerning "two monstrous births & a general earthquake." He hints that the people of the Bay might perhaps as well take these signs to themselves as lay them at the door of Mrs. Hutchinson and what not. "Where is there such another people then [as] in New England, that labors might & main to have Christ formed in them, yet would give or appoint him his shape & clothe him too? It cannot be denied that we have conceived many monstrous imaginations of Christ Jesus: the one imagination says, *Lo, here he is;* the other says, *Lo, there he is;* multiplicity of conceptions, but is there any one true shape of Him? And if one of many produce a shape, 't is not the shape of the Son of God, but an ugly horrid metamorphosis. Neither is it a living shape, but a dead one, yet a crow thinks her own bird the fairest, & most prefer their own wisdom before God's, Antichrist before Christ." Howes had certainly arrived at that "centre" of which he speaks and was before his time, as a man of speculation, never a man of action, may sometimes be. He was fitter for Plotinus's colony than Winthrop's. He never came to New England, yet there was always a leaven of his style of thinkers here.

Howes was the true adept, seeking what spiritual ore there might be among the dross of the hermetic philosophy. What he says sincerely and inwardly was the cant of those outward professors of the doctrine who were content to dwell in the

material part of it forever. In Jonathan Brewster, we have a specimen of these Wagners. Is it not curious, that there should have been a *balneum Mariæ* at New London two hundred years ago? that *la recherche de l'Absolu* should have been going on there in a log-hut, under constant fear that the Indians would put out, not merely the flame of one little life, but, far worse, the fire of our furnace, and so rob the world of this divine secret, just on the point of revealing itself? Alas! poor Brewster's secret was one that many have striven after before and since, who did not call themselves alchemists, — the secret of getting gold without earning it, — a chase that brings some men to a four-in-hand on Shoddy Avenue, and some to the penitentiary, in both cases advertising its utter vanity. Brewster is a capital specimen of his class, who are better than the average, because they *do* mix a little imagination with their sordidness, and who have also their representatives among us, in those who expect the Jennings and other ideal estates in England. If Hawthorne had but known of him! And yet how perfectly did his genius divine that ideal element in our early New England life, conceiving what must have been without asking proof of what actually was!

An extract or two will sufficiently exhibit Brewster in his lunes. Sending back some alchemistic book to Winthrop, he tells him that if his name be kept secret, "I will write as clear a light, as far as I dare to, in finding the first ingredience. . . . The first figure in Flamonell doth plainly resemble the

first ingredience, what it is, & from whence it comes, & how gotten, as there you may plainly see set forth by 2 resemblances held in a man's hand; for the confections there named is a delusion, for they are but the operations of the work after some time set, as the scum of the Red Sea, which is the Virgin's Milk upon the top of the vessel, white. Red Sea is the sun & moon calcinated & brought & reduced into water mineral which in some time, & most of the whole time, is red. 2ndly, the fat of mercurial wind, that is the fat or quintessence of sun & moon, earth & water, drawn out from them both, & flies aloft & [is] bore up by the operation of our mercury, that is our fire which is our air or wind." This is as satisfactory as Lepidus's account of the generation of the crocodile: "Your serpent of Egypt is bred now of your mud by the operation of your sun: so is your crocodile." After describing the three kinds of fire, that of the lamp, that of ashes, and that against nature, which last "is the fire of fire, that is the secret fire drawn up, being the quintessence of the sun & moon, with the other mercurial water joined with & together, which is fire elemental," he tells us that "these fires are & doth contain the whole mystery of the work." The reader, perhaps, thinks that he has nothing to do but forthwith to turn all the lead he can lay his hands on into gold. But no: "If you had the first ingredience & the proportion of each, yet all were nothing if you had not the certain times & seasons of the planets & signs, when to give more or less of this fire, namely

a hot & dry, a cold & moist fire which you must use in the mercurial water before it comes to black & after into white & then red, which is only done by these fires, which when you practise you will easily see & perceive, that you shall stand amazed, & admire at the great & admirable wisdom of God, that can produce such a wonderful, efficacious, powerful thing as this is to convert all metallic bodies to its own nature, which may be well called a first essence. I say by such weak simple means of so little value & so little & easy labor & skill, that I may say with Artephus, 200 page, it is of a worke so easy & short, fitter for women & young children than sage & grave men. . . . I thank the Lord, I understand the matter perfectly in the said book, yet I could desire to have it again 12 months hence, for about that time I shall have occasion to peruse, whenas I come to the second working which is most difficult, which will be some three or [4] months before the perfect white, & afterwards, as Artephus saith, I may burn my books, for he saith it is one regiment as well for the red as for the white. The Lord in mercy give me life to see the end of it!" — an exclamation I more than once made in the course of some of Brewster's periods.

Again, under pledge of profound secrecy, he sends Winthrop a manuscript, which he may communicate to the owner of the volume formerly lent, because "it gave me such light in the second work as I should not readily have found out by study, also & especially how to work the elixir fit for

medicine & healing all maladies which is clean another way of working than we held formerly. Also a light given how to dissolve any hard substance into the elixir, which is also another work. And many other things which in Ribley [Ripley?] I could not find out. More works of the same I would gladly see . . . for, Sir, so it is that any book of this subject, I can understand it, though never so darkly written, having both knowledge & experience of the world,[1] that now easily I may understand their envious carriages to hide it. . . . You may marvel why I should give any light to others in this thing before I have perfected my own. This know, that my work being true thus far by all their writings, it cannot fail . . . for if &c &c you cannot miss if you would, except you break your glass." He confesses he is mistaken as to the time required, which he now, as well as I can make out, reckons at about ten years. "I fear I shall not live to see it finished, in regard partly of the Indians, who, I fear, will raise wars, as also I have a conceit that God sees me not worthy of such a blessing, by reason of my manifold miscarriages." Therefore he "will shortly write all the whole work in few words plainly which may be done in 20 lines from the first to the last & seal it up in a little box & subscribe it to yourself . . . & will so write it that neither wife nor children shall know thereof." If Winthrop should succeed in bringing the work to perfection, Brewster begs him to remember his wife and children. "I mean

[1] "World" here should clearly be "work."

if this my work should miscarry by wars of the Indians, for I may not remove it till it be perfected, otherwise I should so unsettle the body by removing sun & moon out of their settled places, that there would then be no other afterworking." Once more he inculcates secrecy, and for a most comical reason: "For it is such a secret as is not fit for every one either for secrecy or for parts to use it, as God's secret for his glory, to do good therewith, or else they may do a great deal of hurt, spending & employing it to satisfy sinful lusts. Therefore, I intreat you, sir, spare to use my name, & let my letters I send either be safely kept or burned that I write about it, for indeed, sir, I am more than before sensible of the evil effects that will arise by the publishing of it. I should never be at quiet, neither at home nor abroad, for one or other that would be enquiring & seeking after knowledge thereof, that I should be tired out & forced to leave the place: nay, it would be blazed abroad into Europe." How much more comic is nature than any comedy! *Mutato nomine de te.* Take heart, ambitious youth, the sun and moon will be no more disconcerted by any effort of yours than by the pots and pans of Jonathan Brewster. It is a curious proof of the duality so common (yet so often overlooked) in human character, that Brewster was all this while manager of the Plymouth trading-post, near what is now New London. The only professors of the transmutation of metals who still impose on mankind are to be found in what is styled the critical department of literature.

Their *materia prima*, or universal solvent, serves equally for the lead of one friend or the brass of another.

In a letter of Sir Kenelm Digby to J. Winthrop, Jr., we find some odd prescriptions. "For all sorts of agues, I have of late tried the following magnetical experiment with infallible success. Pare the patient's nails when the fit is coming on, & put the parings into a little bag of fine linen or sarsenet, & tie that about a live eel's neck in a tub of water. The eel will die & the patient will recover. And if a dog or hog eat that eel, they will also die."

> "The man recovered of the bite,
> The dog it was that died!"

"I have known one that cured all deliriums & frenzies whatsoever, & at once taking, with an elixir made of dew, nothing but dew purified & nipped up in a glass & digested 15 months till all of it was become a gray powder, not one drop of humidity remaining. This I know to be true, & that first it was as black as ink, then green, then gray, & at 22 months' end it was as white & lustrous as any oriental pearl. But it cured manias at 15 months' end." Poor Brewster would have been the better for a dose of it, as well as some in our day, who expect to cure men of being men by act of Congress. In the same letter Digby boasts of having made known the properties of *quinquina*, and also of the sympathetic powder, with which latter he wrought a "famous cure" of pleasant James Howell, author of the "Letters." I do not

recollect that Howell anywhere alludes to it. In the same letter, Digby speaks of the books he had sent to Harvard College, and promises to send more. In all Paris he cannot find a copy of Blaise Viginere *Des Chiffres*. "I had it in my library in England, but at the plundering of my house I lost it with many other good books. I have *laid out* in all places for it." The words we have underscored would be called a Yankeeism now. The house was Gatehurst, a fine Elizabethan dwelling, still, or lately, standing. Digby made his peace with Cromwell, and professes his readiness to spend his blood for him. He kept well with both sides, and we are not surprised to find Hooke saying that he hears no good of him from any.

The early colonists found it needful to bring over a few trained soldiers, both as drillmasters and engineers. Underhill, Patrick, and Gardner had served in the Low Countries, probably also Mason. As Paris has been said to be not precisely the place for a deacon, so the camp of the Prince of Orange could hardly have been the best training-school for Puritans in practice, however it may have been for masters of casuistic theology. The position of these rough warriors among a people like those of the first emigration must have been a droll one. That of Captain Underhill certainly was. In all our early history, there is no figure so comic. Full of the pedantry of his profession and fond of noble phrases, he is a kind of cross between Dugald Dalgetty and Ancient Pistol, with a slight relish of the *miles gloriosus*. Underhill had

taken side with Mr. Wheelwright in his heretical opinions, and there is every reason why he should have maintained, with all the ardor of personal interest, the efficiency of a covenant of grace without reference to the works of the subject of it. Coming back from a visit to England in 1638, he "was questioned for some speeches uttered by him in the ship, viz: that they at Boston were zealous as the scribes and pharisees were and as Paul was before his conversion, which he denying, they were proved to his face by a sober woman whom he had seduced in the ship and drawn to his opinion; but she was afterwards better informed in the truth. Among other passages, he told her how he came by his assurance, saying that, having long lain under a spirit of bondage, and continued in a legal way near five years, he could get no assurance, till at length, as he was taking a pipe of the good creature tobacco, the spirit fell home upon his heart, an absolute promise of free grace, with such assurance and joy, as he never doubted since of his good estate, neither should he, whatsoever sin he should fall into, — a good preparative for such motions as he familiarly used to make to some of that sex. . . . The next day he was called again and banished. The Lord's day after, he made a speech in the assembly, showing that as the Lord was pleased to convert Paul as he was persecuting &c, so he might manifest himself to him as he was making moderate use of the good creature called tobacco." A week later "he was privately dealt with upon suspicion of incontinency . . . but his excuse was

that the woman was in great trouble of mind, and some temptations, and that he resorted to her to comfort her." He went to the Eastward, and, having run himself out there, thought it best to come back to Boston and reinstate himself by eating his leek. "He came in his worst clothes (being accustomed to take great pride in his bravery and neatness) without a band, in a foul linen cap pulled close to his eyes, and, standing upon a form, he did, with many deep sighs and abundance of tears, lay open his wicked course, his adultery, his hypocrisy &c. He spake well, save that his blubbering &c. interrupted him." We hope he was a sincere penitent, but men of his complexion are apt to be pleased with such a tragi-comedy of self-abasement, if only they can be chief actors and conspicuous enough therein. In the correspondence before us Underhill appears in full turkey-cock proportions. Not having been advanced according to his own opinion of his merits, he writes to Governor Winthrop, with an oblique threat that must have amused him somewhat: "I profess, sir, till I know the cause, I shall not be satisfied, but I hope God will subdue me to his will; yet this I say that such handling of officers in foreign parts hath so far subverted some of them as to cause them turn public rebels against their state & kingdom, which God forbid should ever be found once so much as to appear in my breast." Why, then the world 's mine oyster, which I with sword will open! Next we hear him on a point of military discipline at Salem. "It is this: how they have of their own appoint-

ment made them a captain, lieutenant & ensign, & after such a manner as was never heard of in any school of war, nor in no kingdom under heaven. . . . For my part, if there should not be a reformation in this disordered practise, I would not acknowledge such officers. If officers should be of no better esteem than for constables to place them, & martial discipline to proceed disorderly, I would rather lay down my command than to shame so noble a prince from whom we came." Again: "Whereas it is somewhat questionable whether the three months I was absent, as well in the service of the country as of other particular persons, my request therefore is that this honored Court would be pleased to decide this controversy, myself alleging it to be the custom of Nations that, if a Commander be lent to another State, by that State to whom he is a servant, both his place & means is not detained from him, so long as he doth not refuse the call of his own State to which he is a servant, in case they shall call him home." Then bringing up again his "ancient suit" for a grant of land, he throws in a neat touch of piety: "& if the honored Court shall vouchsafe to make some addition, that which hath not been deserved, by the same power of God, may be in due season." In a postscript, he gives a fine philosophical reason for this desired addition which will go to the hearts of many in these days of high prices and wasteful taxation. "The time was when a little went far; then much was not known nor desired; the reason of the difference lieth only in the error of judg-

ment, for nature requires no more to uphold it now than when it was satisfied with less." The valiant Captain interprets the law of nations, as sovereign powers are wont to do, to suit his advantage in the special case. We find a parallel case in a letter of Bryan Rosseter to John Winthrop, Jr., pleading for a remission of taxes. "The lawes of nations exempt allowed phisitians from personall services, & their estates from rates & assessments." In the Declaration of the town of Southampton on Long Island (1673), the dignity of constable is valued at a juster rate than Underhill was inclined to put upon it. The Dutch, it seems, demanded of them "to deliver up to them the badge of Civil & Military power; namely, the Constable's staffe & the Colonel's." Mayor Munroe of New Orleans did not more effectually magnify his office when he surrendered the city to General Butler.

Underhill's style is always of the finest. His spelling was under the purest covenant of grace. I must give a single specimen of it from a letter whose high moral tone is all the more diverting that it was written while he was under excommunication for the sin which he afterwards confessed. It is addressed to Winthrop and Dudley. "Honnored in the Lord. Youer silenc onc more admirse me. I youse chrischan playnnes. I know you love it. Silenc can not reduce the hart of youer love[s] brother: I would the rightchous would smite me, espeschali youer slfe & the honnored Depoti to whom I also dereckt this letter together with youer honnored slfe. Jesos Christ did wayt; & God his

Father did dig and telfe bout the barren figtre before he would cast it of: I would to God you would tender my soule so as to youse playnnes with me." (As if anything could be plainer than excommunication and banishment!) "I wrot to you both, but now [no] answer; & here I am dayli abused by malischous tongse: John Baker I here hath rot to the honnored depoti how as I was dronck & like to be cild, & both falc, upon okachon I delt with Wannerton for intrushon, & findding them resoluth bent to rout out all gud a mong us & advanc there superstischous waye, & by boystrous words indeferd to fritten men to acomplish his end, & he abusing me to my face, dru upon him with intent to corb his insolent and dasterdli sperrite, but now [no] danger of my life, although it might hafe bin just with God to hafe giffen me in the hanse of youer enemise & mine, for they hat the wayse of the Lord & them that profes them, & therfore layes trapes to cachte the pore into there deboyst corses, as ister daye on Pickeren their Chorch Warden caim up to us with intent to mak some of ourse dronc, as is sospeckted, but the Lord soferd him so to misdemen himslfe as he is likli to li by the hielse this too month. . . . My hombel request is that you will be charitabel of me. . . . Let justies and merci be goyned. . . . You may plese to soggest youer will to this barrer, you will find him tracktabel." The concluding phrase seems admirably chosen, when we consider the means of making people "tractable" which the magistrates of the Bay had in their hands, and

were not slow to exercise, as Underhill himself had experienced.

I cannot deny myself the pleasure of giving one more specimen of the Captain's "grand-delinquent" style, as I once heard such fine writing called by a person who little dreamed what a hit he had made. So far as I have observed, our public defaulters, and others who have nothing to say for themselves, always rise in style as they sink in self-respect. He is speaking of one Scott, who had laid claim to certain lands, and had been called on to show his title. "If he break the comand of the Asembli & bring not in the counterfit portreture of the King imprest in yello waxe, anext to his false perpetuiti of 20 mile square, where by he did chet the Town of Brouckhaven, he is to induer the sentance of the Court of Asisies." Pistol would have been charmed with that splendid amplification of the Great Seal. As examples of Captain Underhill's adroitness in phonetic spelling, I offer *fafarabel* and *poseschonse*, and reluctantly leave him.

Another very entertaining fellow for those who are willing to work through a pretty thick husk of tiresomeness for a genuine kernel of humor underneath is Coddington. The elder Winthrop endured many trials, but I doubt if any were sharper than those which his son had to undergo in the correspondence of this excellently tiresome man. *Tantœ molis Romanam condere gentem!* The dulness of Coddington, always that of no ordinary man, became irritable and aggressive after being stung by

the gadfly of Quakerism. Running counter to its proper nature, it made him morbidly uneasy. Already an Anabaptist, his brain does not seem to have been large enough to lodge two maggots at once with any comfort to himself. Fancy John Winthrop, Jr., with all the affairs of the Connecticut Colony on his back, expected to prescribe alike for the spiritual and bodily ailments of all the hypochondriacs in his government, and with Philip's war impending, — fancy him exposed also to perpetual trials like this: "G. F. [George Fox] hath sent thee a book of his by Jere: Bull, & two more now which thou mayest communicate to thy Council & officers. Also I remember before thy last being in England, I sent thee a book written by Francis Howgall against persecution, by Joseph Nicallson which book thou lovingly accepted and communicated to the Commissioners of the United Colonies (as I desired) also J. N. thou entertained with a loving respect which encouraged me" (fatal hospitality!) — "As a token of that ancient love that for this 42 years I have had for thee, I have sent thee three Manuscripts, one of 5 queries, other is of 15, about the love of Jesus &c. The 3d is why we cannot come to the worship which was not set up by Christ Jesus, which I desire thee to communicate to the priests to answer in thy jurisdiction, the Massachusetts, New Plymouth, or elsewhere, & send their answer in writing to me. Also two printed papers to set up in thy house. It 's reported in Barbadoes that thy brother Sammuell shall be sent Governour to Antego." What a

mere dust of sugar in the last sentence for such a portentous pill! In his next letter he has other writings of G. F., "not yet copied, which if thou desireth, when I hear from thee, I may convey them unto thee. Also sence G. Ffox departure William Edmondson is arrived at this Island, who having given out a paper to all in authority, which, my wife having copied, I have here inclosed presented thee therewith." Books and manuscripts were not all. Coddington was also glad to bestow on Winthrop any wandering tediousness in the flesh that came to hand. "I now understand of John Stubbs freedom to visit thee (with the said Jo: B.) he is a larned man, as witness the battle door[1] on 35 languages," — a terrible man this, capable of inflicting himself on three dozen different kindreds of men. It will be observed that Coddington, with his "thou desireths," is not quite so well up in the grammar of his thee-and-thouing as my Lord Coke. Indeed, it is rather pleasant to see that in his alarm about "the enemy," in 1673, he backslides into the second person plural. If Winthrop ever looked over his father's correspondence, he would have read in a letter of Henry Jacie the following dreadful example of retribution: "The last news we heard was that the Bores in Bavaria slew about three hundred of the Swedish forces & took about 200 prisoners, of which they put out the eyes of some & cut out the tonges of others & so sent them to the King of Sweden,

[1] The title-page of which our learned Marsh has cited for the etymology of the word.

which caused him to lament bytterly for an hour. Then he sent an army & destroyed those Bores, about 200 or 300 of their towns. Thus we hear." Think of that, Master Coddington! Could the sinful heart of man always suppress the wish that a Gustavus might arise to do judgment on the Bores of Rhode Island? The unkindest part of it was that, on Coddington's own statement, Winthrop had never persecuted the Quakers, and had even endeavored to save Robinson and Stevenson in 1659.

Speaking of the execution of these two martyrs to the bee in their bonnets, John Davenport gives us a capital example of the way in which Divine "judgments" may be made to work both ways at the pleasure of the interpreter. As the crowd was going home from the hanging, a drawbridge gave way, and some lives were lost. The Quakers, of course, made the most of this lesson to the *pontifices* in the bearing power of timber, claiming it as a proof of God's wrath against the persecutors. This was rather hard, since none of the magistrates perished, and the popular feeling was strongly in favor of the victims of their severity. But Davenport gallantly captures these Quaker guns, and turns them against the enemy himself. "Sir, the hurt that befell so many, by their own rashness, at the Draw Bridge in Boston, being on the day that the Quakers were executed, was not without God's special providence in judgment & wrath, I fear, against the Quakers & their abettors, who will be much hardened thereby." This is admirable, espe-

cially as his parenthesis about "their own rashness" assumes that the whole thing was owing to natural causes. The pity for the Quakers, too, implied in the "I fear," is a nice touch. It is always noticeable how much more liberal those who deal in God's command without his power are of his wrath than of his mercy. But we should never understand the Puritans if we did not bear in mind that they were still prisoners in that religion of Fear which casts out Love. The nearness of God was oftener a terror than a comfort to them. Yet perhaps in them was the last apparition of Faith as a wonder-worker in human affairs. Take away from them what you will, you cannot deny them *that*, and its constant presence made them great in a way and measure of which this generation, it is to be feared, can have but a very inadequate conception. If men nowadays find their tone antipathetic, it would be modest at least to consider whether the fault be wholly theirs, — whether it was they who lacked, or we who have lost. Whether they were right or wrong in their dealing with the Quakers is not a question to be decided glibly after two centuries' struggle toward a conception of toleration very imperfect even yet, perhaps impossible to human nature. If they did not choose what seems to us the wisest way of keeping the Devil out of their household, they certainly had a very honest will to keep him out, which we might emulate with advantage. However it be in other cases, historic toleration must include intolerance among things to be tolerated.

The false notion which the first settlers had of the savages by whom the continent was beflead rather than inhabited, arose in part from what they had heard of Mexico and Peru, in part from the splendid exaggerations of the early travellers, who could give their readers an El Dorado at the cheap cost of a good lie. Hence the kings, dukes, and earls who were so plenty among the red men. Pride of descent takes many odd shapes, none odder than when it hugs itself in an ancestry of filthy barbarians, who daubed themselves for ornament with a mixture of bear's-grease and soot, or colored clay, and were called emperors by Captain John Smith and his compeers. The droll contrast between this imaginary royalty and the squalid reality is nowhere exposed with more ludicrous unconsciousness than in the following passage of a letter from Fitz-John Winthrop to his father, November, 1674: "The bearer hereof, Mr. Danyell, one of the Royal Indian blood . . . does desire me to give an account to yourself of the late unhappy accident which has happened to him. A little time since, a careless girl playing with fire at the door, it immediately took hold of the mats, & in an instant consumed it to ashes, with all the common as well as his lady's chamber furniture, & his own wardrobe & armory, Indian plate, & money to the value (as is credibly reported in his estimation) of more than an hundred pounds Indian. . . . The Indians have handsomely already built him a good house & brought him in several necessaries for his present supply, but that which takes deepest mel-

ancholy impression upon him is the loss of an excellent Masathuset cloth cloak & hat, which was only seen upon holy days & their general sessions. His journey at this time is only to intreat your favor & the gentlemen there for a kind relief in his necessity, having no kind of garment but a short jerkin which was charitably given him by one of his Common-Councilmen. He principally aims at a cloak & hat."

> "King Stephen was a worthy peer,
> His breeches cost him half a crown."

But it will be observed that there is no allusion to any such article of dress in the costume of this prince of Pequot. Some light is perhaps thrown on this deficiency by a line or two in one of Williams's letters, where he says: "I have long had scruples of selling the Natives ought but what may tend or bring to civilizing: I therefore neither brought nor shall sell them loose coats nor breeches." Precisely the opposite course was deemed effectual with the Highland Scotch, between whom and our Indians there was a very close analogy. They were compelled by law to adopt the usages of *Gallia Braccata*, and sansculottism made a penal offence. What impediment to civilization Williams had discovered in the offending garment it is hard to say. It is a question for Herr Teufelsdröck. Royalty, at any rate, in our day, is dependent for much of its success on the tailor. Williams's opportunities of studying the Indian character were perhaps greater than those of any other man of his time. He was always an advocate for justice to

ward them. But he seems to have had no better opinion of them than Mr. Parkman,[1] calling them shortly and sharply, "wolves endowed with men's brains." The same change of feeling has followed the same causes in their case as in that of the Highlanders, — they have become romantic in proportion as they ceased to be dangerous.

As exhibitions of the writer's character, no letters in the collection have interested me more than those of John Tinker, who for many years was a kind of steward for John Winthrop and his son. They show him to have been a thoroughly faithful, grateful, and unselfish servant. He does not seem to have prospered except in winning respect, for when he died his funeral charges were paid by the public. We learn from one of his letters that John Winthrop, Jr., had a negro (presumably a slave) at Paquanet, for he says that a mad cow there "had almost spoiled the neger & made him ferfull to tend the rest of the cattell." That such slaves must have been rare, however, is plain from his constant complaints about the difficulty of procuring "help," some of which we have already quoted. His spelling of the word "ferfull" shows that the New England pronunciation of that word had been brought from the old country. He also uses the word "creatures" for kine, and the like, precisely as our farmers do now. There is one very comical passage in a letter of the 2d of August, 1660, where he says: "There hath been a motion by some, the chief of the town, (New Lon-

[1] In his *Jesuits in North America.*

don) for my keeping an ordinary, or rather under the notion of a tavern, which, *though it suits not with my genius*, yet am almost persuaded to accept for some good grounds." Tinker's modesty is most creditable to him, and we wish it were more common now. No people on the face of the earth suffer so much as we from impostors who keep inconveniences, "under the notion of a tavern," without any call of natural genius thereto; none endure with such unexemplary patience the superb indifference of innkeepers, and the condescending inattention of their gentlemanly deputies. We are the thralls of our railroads and hotels, and we deserve it.

Richard Saltonstall writes to John Winthrop, Jr., in 1636: "The best thing that I have to beg your thoughts for at this present is a motto or two that Mr. Prynne hath writ upon his chamber walls in the Tower." We copy a few phrases, chiefly for the contrast they make with Lovelace's famous verses to Althea. Nothing could mark more sharply the different habits of mind in Puritan and Cavalier. Lovelace is very charming, but he sings

> "The sweetness, mercy, majesty,
> And glories of *his* King,"

to wit, Charles I. To him "stone walls do not a prison make," so long as he has "freedom in his love, and in his soul is free." Prynne's King was of another and higher kind: "*Carcer excludit mundum, includit Deum. Deus est turris etiam in turre: turris libertatis in turre angustiæ: Turris*

quietis in turre molestiæ. . . . Arctari non potest qui in ipsa Dei infinitate incarceratus spatiatur. . . . Nil crus sentit in nervo si animus sit in cœlo: nil corpus patitur in ergastulo, si anima sit in Christo." If Lovelace has the advantage in fancy, Prynne has it as clearly in depth of sentiment. There could be little doubt which of the parties represented by these men would have the better if it came to a death-grapple.

There is curiously little sentiment in these volumes. Most of the letters, except where some point of doctrine is concerned, are those of shrewd, practical men, busy about the affairs of this world, and earnest to build their New Jerusalem on something more solid than cloud. The truth is, that men anxious about their souls have not been by any means the least skilful in providing for the wants of the body. It was far less the enthusiasm than the common sense of the Puritans which made them what they were in politics and religion. That a great change should be wrought in the settlers by the circumstances of their position was inevitable; that this change should have had some disillusion in it, that it should have weaned them from the ideal and wonted them to the actual, was equally so. In 1664, not much more than a generation after the settlement, Williams prophesies: "When we that have been the eldest are rotting (to-morrow or next day) a generation will act, I fear, far unlike the first Winthrops and their models of love. I fear that the common trinity of the world (profit, preferment, pleasure) will here

be the *tria omnia* as in all the world beside, that Prelacy and Papacy too will in this wilderness predominate, that god Land will be (as now it is) as great a god with us English as god Gold was with the Spaniards. While we are here, noble sir, let us *viriliter hoc agere, rem agere humanam, divinam, Christianam*, which, I believe, is all of a most public genius," or, as we should now say, true patriotism. If Williams means no play on the word *humanam* and *divinam*, the order of precedence in which he marshals them is noticeable. A generation later, what Williams had predicted was in a great measure verified. But what made New England Puritanism narrow was what made Scotch Cameronianism narrow, — its being secluded from the great movement of the nation. Till 1660 the colony was ruled and mostly inhabited by Englishmen closely connected with the party dominant in the mother country, and with their minds broadened by having to deal with questions of state and European policy. After that time they sank rapidly into provincials, narrow in thought, in culture, in creed. Such a pedantic portent as Cotton Mather would have been impossible in the first generation; he was the natural growth of the third, — the manifest judgment of God on a generation who thought Words a saving substitute for Things. Perhaps some injustice has been done to men like the second Governor Dudley, and it should be counted to them rather as a merit than a fault, that they wished to bring New England back within reach of the invigora-

ting influence of national sympathies, and to rescue it from a tradition which had become empty formalism. Puritanism was dead, and its profession had become a wearisome cant before the Revolution of 1688 gave it that vital force in politics which it had lost in religion.

I have gleaned all I could of what is morally picturesque or characteristic from these volumes, but New England history has rather a gregarious than a personal interest. Here, by inherent necessity rather than design, was made the first experiment in practical democracy, and accordingly hence began that reaction of the New World upon the Old whose result can hardly yet be estimated. There is here no temptation to make a hero, who shall sum up in his own individuality and carry forward by his own will that purpose of which we seem to catch such bewitching glances in history, which reveals itself more clearly and constantly, perhaps, in the annals of New England than elsewhere, and which yet, at best, is but tentative, doubtful of itself, turned this way and that by chance, made up of instinct, and modified by circumstance quite as much as it is directed by deliberate forethought. Such a purpose, or natural craving, or result of temporary influences, may be misguided by a powerful character to his own ends, or, if he be strongly in sympathy with it, may be hastened toward its own fulfilment; but there is no such heroic element in our drama, and what is remarkable is, that, under whatever government, democracy grew with the growth of the New England

Colonies, and was at last potent enough to wrench them, and the better part of the continent with them, from the mother country. It is true that Jefferson embodied in the Declaration of Independence the speculative theories he had learned in France, but the impulse to separation came from New England; and those theories had been long since embodied there in the practice of the people, if they had never been formulated in distinct propositions.

I have little sympathy with declaimers about the Pilgrim Fathers, who look upon them all as men of grand conceptions and superhuman foresight. An entire ship's company of Columbuses is what the world never saw. It is not wise to form any theory and fit our facts to it, as a man in a hurry is apt to cram his travelling-bag, with a total disregard of shape or texture. But perhaps it may be found that the facts will only fit comfortably together on a single plan, namely, that the fathers did have a conception (which those will call grand who regard simplicity as a necessary element of grandeur) of founding here a commonwealth on those two eternal bases of Faith and Work; that they had, indeed, no revolutionary ideas of universal liberty, but yet, what answered the purpose quite as well, an abiding faith in the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God; and that they did not so much propose to make all things new, as to develop the latent possibilities of English law and English character, by clearing away the fences by which the abuse of the one was gradually dis-

commoning the other from the broad fields of natural right. They were not in advance of their age, as it is called, for no one who is so can ever work profitably in it; but they were alive to the highest and most earnest thinking of their time.

CARLYLE[1]

1866

A FEELING of comical sadness is likely to come over the mind of any middle-aged man who sets himself to recollecting the names of different authors that have been famous, and the number of contemporary immortalities whose end he has seen since coming to manhood. Many a light, hailed by too careless observers as a fixed star, has proved to be only a short-lived lantern at the tail of a newspaper kite. The literary heaven which our youth saw dotted thick with rival glories, we find now to have been a stage-sky merely, artificially enkindled from behind; and the cynical daylight which is sure to follow all theatrical enthusiasms shows us ragged holes where once were luminaries, sheer vacancy instead of lustre. Our earthly reputations, says a great poet, are the color of grass, and the same sun that makes the green bleaches it out again. But next morning is not the time to criticise the scene-painter's firmament, nor is it quite fair to examine coldly a part of some general illusion in the absence of that sympathetic enthusiasm, that self-surrender of the fancy, which made it what it was. It would not be safe for all neglected au-

[1] Apropos of his *Frederick the Great.*

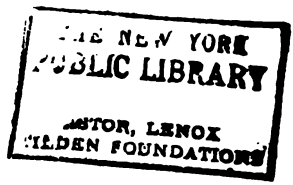
thors to comfort themselves in Wordsworth's fashion, inferring genius in an inverse proportion to public favor, and a high and solitary merit from the world's indifference. On the contrary, it would be more just to argue from popularity a certain amount of real value, though it may not be of that permanent quality which insures enduring fame. The contemporary world and Wordsworth were both half right. He undoubtedly owned and worked the richest vein of his period; but he offered to his contemporaries a heap of gold-bearing quartz where the baser mineral made the greater show, and the purchaser must do his own crushing and smelting, with no guaranty but the bare word of the miner. It was not enough that certain bolder adventurers should now and then show a nugget in proof of the success of their venture. The gold of the poet must be refined, moulded, stamped with the image and superscription of his time, but with a beauty of design and finish that are of no time. The work must surpass the material. Wordsworth was wholly void of that shaping imagination which is the highest criterion of a poet.

Immediate popularity and lasting fame, then, would seem to be the result of different qualities, and not of mere difference in degree. It is safe to prophesy a certain durability of recognition for any author who gives evidence of intellectual force, in whatever kind, above the average amount. There are names in literary history which are only names; and the works associated with them, like acts of

[redacted]

[illegible] heliotypeprint [illegible] daguerreotype taken in [illegible] now in possession of [illegible] Sarcelle

Etched by [illegible] A. Schell.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Congress already agreed on in debate, are read by their titles and passed. What is it that insures what may be called living fame, so that a book shall be at once famous and read? What is it that relegates divine Cowley to that remote, uncivil Pontus of the "British Poets," and keeps garrulous Pepys within the cheery circle of the evening lamp and fire? Originality, eloquence, sense, imagination, not one of them is enough by itself, but only in some happy mixture and proportion. Imagination seems to possess in itself more of the antiseptic property than any other single quality; but, without less showy and more substantial allies, it can at best give only deathlessness, without the perpetual youth that makes it other than dreary. It were easy to find examples of this Tithonus immortality, setting its victims apart from both gods and men; helpless duration, undying, to be sure, but sapless and voiceless also, and long ago deserted by the fickle Hemera. And yet chance could confer that gift on Glaucus, which love and the consent of Zeus failed to secure for the darling of the Dawn. Is it mere luck, then? Luck may, and often does, have some share in ephemeral successes, as in a gambler's winnings spent as soon as got, but not in any lasting triumph over time. Solid success must be based on solid qualities and the honest culture of them.

The first element of contemporary popularity is undoubtedly the power of entertaining. If a man have anything to tell, the world cannot be called upon to listen to him unless he have perfected him-

self in the best way of telling it. People are not to be argued into a pleasurable sensation, nor is taste to be compelled by any syllogism, however stringent. An author may make himself very popular, however, and even justly so, by appealing to the passion of the moment, without having anything in him that shall outlast the public whim which he satisfies. Churchill is a remarkable example of this. He had a surprising extemporary vigor of mind; his phrase carries great weight of blow; he undoubtedly surpassed all contemporaries, as Cowper says of him, in a certain rude and earth-born vigor; but his verse is dust and ashes now, solemnly inurned, of course, in the Chalmers columbarium, and without danger of violation. His brawn and muscle are fading traditions, while the fragile, shivering genius of Cowper is still a good life on the books of the Critical Insurance Office. "It is not, then, loftiness of mind that puts one by the side of Virgil?" cries poor old Cavalcanti at his wits' end. Certainly not altogether that. There must be also the great Mantuan's art; his power, not only of being strong in parts, but of making those parts coherent in an harmonious whole, and tributary to it. Gray, if we may believe the commentators, has not an idea, scarcely an epithet, that he can call his own; and yet he is, in the best sense, one of the classics of English literature. He had exquisite felicity of choice; his dictionary had no vulgar word in it, no harsh one, but all culled from the luckiest moods of poets, and with a faint but delicious aroma of association; he had a perfect sense

of sound, and one idea without which all the poetic outfit (*si absit prudentia*) is of little avail, — that of combination and arrangement, in short, of art. The poets from whom he helped himself have no more claim to any of his poems as wholes, than the various beauties of Greece (if the old story were true) to the Venus of the artist.

Imagination, as we have said, has more virtue to keep a book alive than any other single faculty. Burke is rescued from the usual doom of orators, because his learning, his experience, his sagacity are rimmed with a halo by this bewitching light behind the intellectual eye from the highest heaven of the brain. Shakespeare has impregnated his common sense with the steady glow of it, and answers the mood of youth and age, of high and low, immortal as that dateless substance of the soul he wrought in. To have any chance of lasting, a book must satisfy, not merely some fleeting fancy of the day, but a constant longing and hunger of human nature; and it needs only a superficial study of literature to be convinced that real fame depends rather on the sum of an author's powers than on any brilliancy of special parts. There must be wisdom as well as wit, sense no less than imagination, judgment in equal measure with fancy, and the fiery rocket must be bound fast to the poor wooden stick that gives it guidance if it would mount and draw all eyes. There are some who think that the brooding patience which a great work calls for belonged exclusively to an earlier period than ours. Others lay the blame on our fashion of periodical

publication, which necessitates a sensation and a crisis in every number, and forces the writer to strive for startling effects, instead of that general lowness of tone which is the last achievement of the artist. The simplicity of antique passion, the homeliness of antique pathos, seems not merely to be gone out of fashion, but out of being as well. Modern poets appear rather to tease their words into a fury, than to infuse them with the deliberate heats of their matured conception, and strive to replace the rapture of the mind with a fervid intensity of phrase. Our reaction from the decorous platitudes of the last century has no doubt led us to excuse this, and to be thankful for something like real fire, though of stubble; but our prevailing style of criticism, which regards parts rather than wholes, which dwells on the beauty of passages, and, above all, must have its languid nerves pricked with the expected sensation at whatever cost, has done all it could to confirm us in our evil way. Passages are good when they lead to something, when they are necessary parts of the building, but they are not good to dwell in. This taste for the startling reminds us of something which happened once at the burning of a country meeting-house. The building stood on a hill, and, apart from any other considerations, the fire was as picturesque as could be desired. When all was a black heap, licking itself here and there with tongues of fire, there rushed up a farmer gasping anxiously, "Hez the bell fell yit?" An ordinary fire was no more to him than that on his hearthstone; even the

burning of a meeting-house, in itself a vulcanic rarity, could not (so long as he was of another parish,) tickle his outworn palate; but he had hoped for a certain *tang* in the downcome of the bell that might recall the boyish flavor of conflagration. There was something dramatic, no doubt, in this surprise of the brazen sentinel at his post, but the breathless rustic has always seemed to me a type of the prevailing delusion in æsthetics. Alas! if the bell must fall in every stanza or every monthly number, how shall an author contrive to stir us at last, unless with whole Moscows, crowned with the tintinnabulary crash of the Kremlin? For myself I am glad to feel that I am still able to find contentment in the more conversational and domestic tone of my old-fashioned wood-fire. No doubt a great part of our pleasure in reading is unexpectedness, whether in turn of thought or of phrase; but an emphasis out of place, an intensity of expression not founded on sincerity of moral or intellectual conviction, reminds one of the underscorings in young ladies' letters, a wonder even to themselves under the colder north-light of matronage. It is the part of the critic, however, to keep cool under whatever circumstances, and to reckon that the excesses of an author will be at first more attractive to the many than that average power which shall win him attention with a new generation of men. It is seldom found out by the majority, till after a considerable interval, that he was the original man who contrived to be simply natural, — the hardest lesson in the school of art

and the latest learned, if, indeed, it be a thing capable of acquisition at all. The most winsome and wayward of brooks draws now and then some lover's foot to its intimate reserve, while the spirt of a bursting water-pipe gathers a gaping crowd forthwith.

Mr. Carlyle is an author who has now been so long before the world, that we may feel toward him something of the unprejudice of posterity. It has long been evident that he had no more ideas to bestow upon us, and that no new turn of his kaleidoscope would give us anything but some variation of arrangement in the brilliant colors of his style. It is perhaps possible, then, to arrive at some not wholly inadequate estimate of his place as a writer, and especially of the value of the ideas whose advocate he makes himself, with a bitterness and violence that increase, as it seems to me, in proportion as his inward conviction of their truth diminishes.

The leading characteristics of an author who is in any sense original, that is to say, who does not merely reproduce, but modifies the influence of tradition, culture, and contemporary thought upon himself by some admixture of his own, may commonly be traced more or less clearly in his earliest works. This is more strictly true, no doubt, of poets, because the imagination is a fixed quantity, not to be increased by any amount of study and reflection. Skill, wisdom, and even wit are cumulative; but that diviner faculty, which is the spiritual eye, though it may be trained and sharpened, cannot be added to by taking thought. This has always been

something innate, unaccountable, to be laid to a happy conjunction of the stars. Goethe, the last of the *great* poets, accordingly takes pains to tell us under what planets he was born; and in him it is curious how uniform the imaginative quality is from the beginning to the end of his long literary activity. His early poems show maturity, his mature ones a youthful freshness. The apple already lies potentially in the blossom, as that may be traced also by cutting across the ripened fruit. With a mere change of emphasis, Goethe might be called an old boy at both ends of his career.

In the earliest authorship of Mr. Carlyle we find some not obscure hints of the future man. Nearly fifty years ago he contributed a few literary and critical articles to the Edinburgh Encyclopædia. The outward fashion of them is that of the period; but they are distinguished by a certain security of judgment remarkable at any time, remarkable especially in one so young. British criticism has been always more or less parochial; has never, indeed, quite freed itself from sectarian cant and planted itself honestly on the æsthetic point of view. It cannot quite persuade itself that truth is of immortal essence, totally independent of all assistance from quarterly journals or the British army and navy. Carlyle, in these first essays, already shows the influence of his master, Goethe, the most widely receptive of critics. In a compact notice of Montaigne, there is not a word as to his religious scepticism. The character is looked at purely from its human and literary sides. As illustrating the

bent of the author's mind, the following passage is most to our purpose: "A modern reader will not easily cavil at the patient and good-natured, though exuberant egotism which brings back to our view 'the form and pressure' of a time long past. *The habits and humors, the mode of acting and thinking, which characterized a Gascon gentleman in the sixteenth century, cannot fail to amuse an inquirer of the nineteenth; while the faithful delineation of human feelings, in all their strength and weakness, will serve as a mirror to every mind capable of self-examination.*" We find here no uncertain indication of that eye for the moral picturesque, and that sympathetic appreciation of character, which within the next few years were to make Carlyle the first in insight of English critics and the most vivid of English historians. In all his earlier writing he never loses sight of his master's great rule, *Den Gegenstand fest zu halten.* He accordingly gave to Englishmen the first humanly possible likeness of Voltaire, Diderot, Mirabeau, and others, who had hitherto been measured by the usual British standard of their respect for the geognosy of Moses and the historic credibility of the Books of Chronicles. What was the real meaning of this phenomenon? what the amount of this man's honest performance in the world? and in what does he show that family-likeness, common to all the sons of Adam, which gives us a fair hope of being able to comprehend him? These were the questions which Carlyle seems to have set himself honestly to answer in the critical writings which

fill the first period of his life as a man of letters. In this mood he rescued poor Boswell from the unmerited obloquy of an ungrateful generation, and taught us to see something half-comically beautiful in the poor, weak creature, with his pathetic instinct of reverence for what was nobler, wiser, and stronger than himself. Everything that Mr. Carlyle wrote during this first period thrills with the purest appreciation of whatever is brave and beautiful in human nature, with the most vehement scorn of cowardly compromise with things base; and yet, immitigable as his demand for the highest in us seems to be, there is always something reassuring in the humorous sympathy with mortal frailty which softens condemnation and consoles for shortcoming. The remarkable feature of Mr. Carlyle's criticism (see, for example, his analysis and exposition of Goethe's "Helena") is the sleuth-hound instinct with which he presses on to the *matter* of his theme, — never turned aside by a false scent, regardless of the outward beauty of form, sometimes almost contemptuous of it, in his hunger after the intellectual nourishment which it may hide. The delicate skeleton of admirably articulated and related parts which underlies and sustains every true work of art, and keeps it from sinking on itself a shapeless heap, he would crush remorselessly to come at the marrow of meaning. With him the ideal sense is secondary to the ethical and metaphysical, and he has but a faint conception of their possible unity.

By degrees the humorous element in his nature

gains ground, till it overmasters all the rest. Becoming always more boisterous and obtrusive, it ends at last, as such humor must, in cynicism. In "Sartor Resartus" it is still kindly, still infused with sentiment; and the book, with its mixture of indignation and farce, strikes one as might the prophecies of Jeremiah, if the marginal comments of the Rev. Mr. Sterne in his wildest mood had by some accident been incorporated with the text. In "Sartor" the marked influence of Jean Paul is undeniable, both in matter and manner. It is curious for one who studies the action and reaction of national literatures on each other, to see the humor of Swift and Sterne and Fielding, after filtering through Richter, reappear in Carlyle with a tinge of Germanism that makes it novel, alien, or even displeasing, as the case may be, to the English mind. Unhappily the bit of *mother* from Swift's vinegar-barrel has had strength enough to sour all the rest. The whimsicality of "Tristram Shandy," which, even in the original, has too often the effect of forethought, becomes a deliberate artifice in Richter, and at last a mere mannerism in Carlyle.

Mr. Carlyle in his critical essays had the advantage of a well-defined theme, and of limits both in the subject and in the space allowed for its treatment, which kept his natural extravagance within bounds, and compelled some sort of discretion and compactness. The great merit of these essays lay in a criticism based on wide and various study, which, careless of tradition, applied its standard to

the real and not the contemporary worth of the literary or other performance to be judged, and in an unerring eye for that fleeting expression of the moral features of character, a perception of which alone makes the drawing of a coherent likeness possible. Their defect was a tendency, gaining strength with years, to confound the moral with the æsthetic standard, and to make the value of an author's work dependent on the general force of his nature rather than on its special fitness for a given task. In proportion as his humor gradually overbalanced the other qualities of his mind, his taste for the eccentric, amorphous, and violent in men became excessive, disturbing more and more his perception of the more commonplace attributes which give consistency to portraiture. His "French Revolution" is a series of lurid pictures, unmatched for vehement power, in which the figures of such sons of earth as Mirabeau and Danton loom gigantic and terrible as in the glare of an eruption, their shadows swaying far and wide grotesquely awful. But all is painted by eruption-flashes in violent light and shade. There are no half-tints, no gradations, and one finds it impossible to account for the continuance in power of less Titanic actors in the tragedy like Robespierre, on any theory whether of human nature or of individual character supplied by Mr. Carlyle. Of his success, however, in accomplishing what he aimed at, which was to haunt the mind with memories of a horrible political nightmare, there can be no doubt.

Goethe says, apparently thinking of Richter, "The worthy Germans have persuaded themselves that the essence of true humor is formlessness." Heine had not yet shown that a German might combine the most airy humor with a sense of form as delicate as Goethe's own, and that there was no need to borrow the bow of Philoctetes for all kinds of game. Mr. Carlyle's own tendency was toward the lawless, and the attraction of Jean Paul made it an overmastering one. Goethe, I think, might have gone farther, and affirmed that nothing but the highest artistic sense can prevent humor from degenerating into the grotesque, and thence downwards to utter anarchy. Rabelais is a striking example of it. The moral purpose of his book cannot give it that unity which the instinct and forethought of art only can bring forth. Perhaps we owe the masterpiece of humorous literature to the fact that Cervantes had been trained to authorship in a school where form predominated over substance, and the most convincing proof of the supremacy of art at the highest period of Greek literature is to be found in Aristophanes. Mr. Carlyle has no artistic sense of form or rhythm, scarcely of proportion. Accordingly he looks on verse with contempt as something barbarous, — the savage ornament which a higher refinement will abolish, as it has tattooing and nose-rings. With a conceptive imagination vigorous beyond any in his generation, with a mastery of language equalled only by the greatest poets, he wants altogether the plastic imagination, the shaping faculty, which would have

made him a poet in the highest sense. He is a preacher and a prophet, — anything you will, — but an artist he is not, and never can be. It is always the knots and gnarls of the oak that he admires, never the perfect and balanced tree.

It is certainly more agreeable to be grateful for what we owe an author, than to blame him for what he cannot give us. But it is sometimes the business of a critic to trace faults of style and of thought to their root in character and temperament, to show their necessary relation to, and dependence on, each other, and to find some more trustworthy explanation than mere wantonness of will for the moral obliquities of a man so largely moulded and gifted as Mr. Carlyle. So long as he was merely an exhorter or dehorter, we were thankful for such eloquence, such humor, such vivid or grotesque images, and such splendor of illustration as only he could give; but when he assumes to be a teacher of moral and political philosophy, when he himself takes to compounding the social panaceas he has made us laugh at so often, and advertises none as genuine but his own, we begin to inquire into his qualifications and his defects, and to ask ourselves whether his patent pill differ from others except in the larger amount of aloes, or have any better recommendation than the superior advertising powers of a mountebank of genius. Comparative criticism teaches us that moral and æsthetic defects are more nearly related than is commonly supposed. Had Mr. Carlyle been fitted out completely by nature as an artist,

he would have had an ideal in his work which would have lifted his mind away from the muddier part of him, and trained him to the habit of seeking and seeing the harmony rather than the discord and contradiction of things. His innate love of the picturesque, (which is only another form of the sentimentalism he so scoffs at, perhaps as feeling it a weakness in himself,)[1] once turned in the direction of character, and finding its chief satisfaction there, led him to look for that ideal of human nature in individual men which is but fragmentarily represented in the entire race, and is rather divined from the aspiration, forever disenchanted to be forever renewed, of the immortal part in us, than found in any example of actual achievement. A wiser temper would have seen something more consoling than disheartening in the continual failure of men eminently endowed to reach the standard of this spiritual requirement, would perhaps have found in it an inspiring hint that it is mankind, and not special men, that are to be shaped at last into the image of God, and that the endless life of the generations may hope to come nearer that goal of which the short-breathed threescore years and ten fall too unhappily short.

But Mr. Carlyle has invented the Hero-cure, and all who recommend any other method, or see any hope of healing elsewhere, are either quacks

[1] Thirty years ago, when this was written, I ventured only a hint that Carlyle was essentially a sentimentalist. In what has been published since his death I find proof of what I had divined rather than definitely formulated. (1888.)

and charlatans or their victims. His lively imagination conjures up the image of an impossible he, as contradictorily endowed as the chief personage in a modern sentimental novel, who, at all hazards, must not lead mankind like a shepherd, but bark, bite, and otherwise worry them toward the fold like a truculent sheep-dog. If Mr. Carlyle would only now and then recollect that men are men, and not sheep, nay, that the farther they are from being such, the more well grounded our hope of one day making something better of them! It is indeed strange that one who values Will so highly in the greatest should be blind to its infinite worth in the least of men; nay, that he should so often seem to confound it with its irritable and purposeless counterfeit, Wilfulness. The natural impatience of an imaginative temperament, which conceives so vividly the beauty and desirableness of a nobler manhood and a diviner political order, makes him fret at the slow moral processes by which the All-Wise brings about his ends, and turns the very foolishness of men to his praise and glory. Mr. Carlyle is for calling down fire from Heaven whenever he cannot readily lay his hand on the match-box. No doubt it is somewhat provoking that it should be so easy to build castles in the air, and so hard to find tenants for them. It is a singular intellectual phenomenon to see a man, who earlier in life so thoroughly appreciated the innate weakness and futile tendency of the "storm and thrust" period of German literature, constantly assimilating, as he grows older, more and more

nearly to its principles and practice. It is no longer the sagacious and moderate Goethe who is his type of what is highest in human nature, but far rather some Götz of the Iron Hand, some assertor of the divine legitimacy of *Faustrecht*. It is odd to conceive the fate of Mr. Carlyle under the sway of any of his heroes, how Cromwell would have scorned him as a babbler more long-winded than Prynne, but less clear and practical, how Friedrich would have scoffed at his tirades as *dummes Zeug* not to be compared with the romances of Crébillon *fils*, or possibly have clapped him in a marching regiment as a fit subject for the cane of the sergeant. Perhaps something of Mr. Carlyle's irritability is to be laid to the account of his early schoolmastership at Kirkcaldy. This great booby World is such a dull boy, and will not learn the lesson we have taken such pains in expounding for the fiftieth time. Well, then, if eloquence, if example, if the awful warning of other little boys who neglected their accidence and came to the gallows, if none of these avail, the birch at least is left, and we will try that. The dominie spirit has become every year more obtrusive and intolerant in Mr. Carlyle's writing, and the rod, instead of being kept in its place as a resource for desperate cases, has become the alpha and omega of all successful training, the one divinely-appointed means of human enlightenment and progress, in short, the final hope of that absurd animal who fancies himself a little lower than the angels. Have we feebly taken it for granted that the dis-

tinction of man was reason? Never was there a more fatal misconception. It is in the gift of unreason that we are unenviably distinguished from the brutes, whose nobler privilege of instinct saves them from our blunders and our crimes.

But since Mr. Carlyle has become possessed with the hallucination that he is head-master of this huge boys' school which we call the world, his pedagogic birch has grown to the taller proportions and more ominous aspect of a gallows. His article on Dr. Francia was a panegyric of the halter, in which the gratitude of mankind is invoked for the self-appointed dictator who had discovered in Paraguay a tree more beneficent than that which produced the Jesuits' bark. Mr. Carlyle seems to be in the condition of a man who uses stimulants, and must increase his dose from day to day as the senses become dulled under the spur. He began by admiring strength of character and purpose and the manly self-denial which makes a humble fortune great by steadfast loyalty to duty. He has gone on till mere strength has become such washy weakness that there is no longer any titillation in it; and nothing short of downright violence will rouse his nerves now to the needed excitement. At first he made out very well with remarkable men; then, lessening the water and increasing the spirit, he took to Heroes: and now he must have downright *in*humanity, or the draught has no savor; so he gets on at last to Kings, types of remorseless Force, who maintain the political views of Berserkers by the legal principles of Lynch.

Constitutional monarchy is a failure, representative government is a gabble, democracy a birth of the bottomless pit; there is no hope for mankind except in getting themselves under a good driver who shall not spare the lash. And yet, unhappily for us, these drivers are providential births not to be contrived by any cunning of ours, and Friedrich II. is hitherto the last of them. Meanwhile the world's wheels have got fairly stalled in mire and other matter of every vilest consistency and most disgustful smell. What are we to do? Mr. Carlyle will not let us make a lever with a rail from the next fence, or call in the neighbors. That would be too commonplace and cowardly, too anarchical. No; he would have us sit down beside him in the slough and shout lustily for Hercules. If that indispensable demigod will not or cannot come, we can find a useful and instructive solace, during the intervals of shouting, in a hearty abuse of human nature, which, at the long last, is always to blame.

Since "Sartor Resartus" Mr. Carlyle has done little but repeat himself with increasing emphasis and heightened shrillness. Warning has steadily heated toward denunciation, and remonstrance soured toward scolding. The image of the Tartar prayer-mill, which he borrowed from Richter and turned to such humorous purpose, might be applied to himself. The same phrase comes round and round, only the machine, being a little crankier, rattles more, and the performer is called on for a more visible exertion. If there be not something

very like cant in Mr. Carlyle's later writings, then cant is not the repetition of a creed after it has become a phrase by the cooling of that white-hot conviction which once made it both the light and warmth of the soul. I do not mean intentional and deliberate cant, but neither is that which Mr. Carlyle denounces so energetically in his fellow-men of that conscious kind. I do not mean to blame him for it, but mention it rather as an interesting phenomenon of human nature. The stock of ideas which mankind has to work with is very limited, like the alphabet, and can at best have an air of freshness given it by new arrangements and combinations, or by application to new times and circumstances. Montaigne is but Ecclesiastes writing in the sixteenth century, Voltaire but Lucian in the eighteenth. Yet both are original, and so certainly is Mr. Carlyle, whose borrowing is mainly from his own former works. But he does this so often and so openly, that we may at least be sure that he ceased growing a number of years ago, and is a remarkable example of arrested development.

The cynicism, however, which has now become the prevailing temper of his mind, has gone on expanding with unhappy vigor. In Mr. Carlyle it is not, certainly, as in Swift, the result of personal disappointment, and of the fatal eye of an accomplice for the mean qualities by which power could be attained that it might be used for purposes as mean. It seems rather the natural corruption of his exuberant humor. Humor in its first analysis is a perception of the incongruous, and in its high-

est development, of the incongruity between the actual and the ideal in men and life. With so keen a sense of the ludicrous contrast between what men might be, nay, wish to be, and what they are, and with a vehement nature that demands the instant realization of his vision of a world altogether heroic, it is no wonder that Mr. Carlyle, always hoping for a thing and always disappointed, should become bitter. Perhaps if he expected less he would find more. Saul seeking his father's asses found himself turned suddenly into a king; but Mr. Carlyle, on the lookout for a king, always seems to find the other sort of animal. He sees nothing on any side of him but a procession of the Lord of Misrule, in gloomier moments, a Dance of Death, where everything is either a parody of whatever is noble, or an aimless jig that stumbles at last into the annihilation of the grave, and so passes from one nothing to another. Is a world, then, which buys and reads Mr. Carlyle's works distinguished only for its "fair, large ears"? If he who has read and remembered so much would only now and then call to mind the old proverb, *Nec deus, nec lupus, sed homo!* If he would only recollect that, from the days of the first grandfather, everybody has remembered a golden age behind him! No doubt Adam depreciated the apple which the little Cain on his knee was crunching, by comparison with those he himself had tasted in Eden.

The very qualities, it seems to me, which came so near making a great poet of Mr. Carlyle, dis-

qualify him for the office of historian. The poet's concern is with the appearances of things, with their harmony in that whole which the imagination demands for its satisfaction, and their truth to that ideal nature which is the proper object of poetry. History, unfortunately, is very far from being ideal, still farther from an exclusive interest in those heroic or typical figures which answer all the wants of the epic and the drama and fill their utmost artistic limits. Mr. Carlyle has an unequalled power and vividness in painting detached scenes, in bringing out in their full relief the oddities or peculiarities of character; but he has a far feebler sense of those gradual changes of opinion, that strange communication of sympathy from mind to mind, that subtle influence of very subordinate actors in giving a direction to policy or action, which we are wont somewhat vaguely to call the progress of events. His scheme of history is purely an epical one, where only leading figures appear by name and are in any strict sense operative. He has no conception of the people as anything else than an element of mere brute force in political problems, and would sniff scornfully at that unpicturesque common-sense of the many, which comes slowly to its conclusions, no doubt, but compels obedience even from rulers the most despotic when once its mind is made up. His history of Frederick is, of course, a Fritziad; but next to his hero, the cane of the drill-sergeant and iron ramrods appear to be the conditions which to his mind satisfactorily account for the result of the

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Seven Years War. It is our opinion, which subsequent events seem to justify, that, had there not been in the Prussian people a strong instinct of nationality, Protestant nationality too, and an intimate conviction of its advantages, the war might have ended quite otherwise. Frederick II. left the machine of war which he received from his father even more perfect than he found it, yet within a few years of his death it went to pieces before the shock of French armies animated by an idea. Again a few years, and the Prussian soldiery, inspired once more by the old national fervor, were victorious. After all, is it not moral forces that make the heaviest battalions, other things being tolerably equal? Were it not for the purely picturesque bias of Mr. Carlyle's genius, for the necessity which his epical treatment lays upon him of always having a protagonist, we should be astonished that an idealist like him should have so little faith in ideas and so much in matter.

Mr. Carlyle's manner is not so well suited to the historian as to the essayist. He is always great in single figures and striking episodes, but there is neither gradation nor continuity. He has extraordinary patience and conscientiousness in the gathering and sifting of his material, but is scornful of commonplace facts and characters, impatient of whatever will not serve for one of his clever sketches, or group well in a more elaborate figure-piece. He sees history, as it were, by flashes of lightning. A single scene, whether a landscape or an interior, a single figure or a wild mob of men, whatever

may be snatched by the eye in that instant of intense illumination, is minutely photographed upon the memory. Every tree and stone, almost every blade of grass; every article of furniture in a room; the attitude or expression, nay, the very buttons and shoe-ties of a principal figure; the gestures of momentary passion in a wild throng, — everything leaps into vision under that sudden glare with a painful distinctness that leaves the retina quivering. The intervals are absolute darkness. Mr. Carlyle makes us acquainted with the isolated spot where we happen to be when the flash comes, as if by actual eyesight, but there is no possibility of a comprehensive view. No other writer compares with him for vividness. He is himself a witness, and makes us witnesses of whatever he describes. This is genius beyond a question, and of a very rare quality, but it is not history. He has not the cold-blooded impartiality of the historian; and while he entertains us, moves us to tears or laughter, makes us the unconscious captives of his ever-changeful mood, we find that he has taught us comparatively little. His imagination is so powerful that it makes him the contemporary of his characters, and thus his history seems to be the memoirs of a cynical humorist, with hearty likes and dislikes, with something of acridity in his partialities whether for or against, more keenly sensitive to the grotesque than to the simply natural, and who enters in his diary, even of what comes within the range of his own observation, only so much as amuses his fancy, is congenial with his humor, or feeds his

prejudice. Mr. Carlyle's method is accordingly altogether pictorial, his hasty temper making narrative wearisome to him. In his Friedrich, for example, we get very little notion of the civil administration of Prussia; and when he comes, in the last volume, to his hero's dealings with civil reforms, he confesses candidly that it would tire him too much to tell us about it, even if he knew anything at all satisfactory himself.

Mr. Carlyle's historical compositions are wonderful prose poems, full of picture, incident, humor, and character, where we grow familiar with his conception of certain leading personages, and even of subordinate ones, if they are necessary to the scene, so that they come out living upon the stage from the dreary limbo of names; but this is no more history than the historical plays of Shakespeare. There is nothing in imaginative literature superior in its own way to the episode of Voltaire in the Fritziad. It is delicious in humor, masterly in minute characterization. We feel as if the principal victim (for we cannot help feeling all the while that he is so) of this mischievous genius had been put upon the theatre before us by some perfect mimic like Foote, who had studied his habitual gait, gestures, tones, turn of thought, costume, trick of feature, and rendered them with the slight dash of caricature needful to make the whole composition tell. It is in such things that Mr. Carlyle is beyond all rivalry, and that we must go back to Shakespeare for a comparison. But the mastery of Shakespeare is

shown perhaps more strikingly in his treatment of the ordinary than of the exceptional. His is the gracious equality of Nature herself. Mr. Carlyle's gift is rather in the representation than in the evolution of character; and it is a necessity of his art, therefore, to exaggerate slightly his heroic, and to caricature in like manner his comic parts. His appreciation is less psychological than physical and external. Grimm relates that Garrick, riding once with Préville, proposed to him that they should counterfeit drunkenness. They rode through Passy accordingly, deceiving all who saw them. When beyond the town Préville asked how he had succeeded. "Excellently," said Garrick, "as to your body; but your legs were not tipsy." Mr. Carlyle would be as exact in his observation of nature as the great actor, and would make us *see* a drunken man as well; but we doubt whether he could have conceived that unmatchable scene in Antony and Cleopatra, where the tipsiness of Lepidus pervades the whole metaphysical no less than the physical part of the triumvir. If his sympathies bore any proportion to his instinct for catching those traits which are the expression of character, but not character itself, we might have had a great historian in him instead of a history-painter. But that which is a main element in Mr. Carlyle's talent, and does perhaps more than anything else to make it effective, is a defect of his nature. The cynicism which renders him so entertaining precludes him from any just conception of men and their

motives, and from any sane estimate of the relative importance of the events which concern them. I remember a picture of Hamon's, where before a Punch's theatre are gathered the wisest of mankind in rapt attention. Socrates sits on a front bench, absorbed in the spectacle, and in the corner stands Dante making entries in his note-book. Mr. Carlyle as an historian leaves us in somewhat such a mood. The world is a puppet-show, and when we have watched the play out, we depart with a half-comic consciousness of the futility of all human enterprise, and the ludicrousness of all man's action and passion on the stage of the world. Simple, kindly, blundering Oliver Goldsmith was after all wiser, and his Vicar, ideal as Hector and not less immortal, is a demonstration of the perennial beauty and heroism of the homeliest human nature. The cynical view is congenial to certain moods, and is so little inconsistent with original nobleness of mind, that it is not seldom the acetous fermentation of it; but it is the view of the satirist, not of the historian, and takes in but a narrow arc in the circumference of truth. Cynicism in itself is essentially disagreeable. It is the intellectual analogue of the truffle; and though it may be very well in giving a relish to thought for certain palates, it cannot supply the substance of it. Mr. Carlyle's cynicism is not that highbred weariness of the outsides of life which we find in Ecclesiastes. It goes much deeper than that to the satisfactions, not of the body or the intellect, but of the very soul as well. It vaunts itself; it is noisy and aggres-

sive. What the wise master puts into the mouth of desperate ambition, thwarted of the fruit of its crime, as the fitting expression of passionate sophistry, seems to have become an article of his creed. With him

> "Life *is* a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing."

He goes about with his Diogenes dark-lantern, professing to seek a man, but inwardly resolved to find a monkey. He loves to flash it suddenly on poor human nature in some ridiculous or degrading posture. He admires still, or keeps affirming that he admires, the doughty, silent, hard-working men who go honestly about their business; but when we come to his later examples, we find that it is not loyalty to duty or to an inward ideal of high-mindedness that he finds admirable in them, but a blind unquestioning vassalage to whomsoever it has pleased him to set up for a hero. He would fain replace the old feudalism with a spiritual counterpart, in which there shall be an obligation to soul-service. He who once popularized the word *flunkey* by ringing the vehement changes of his scorn upon it, is at last forced to conceive an ideal flunkeyism to squire the hectoring Don Belianises of his fancy about the world. Failing this, his latest theory of Divine government seems to be the cudgel. Poets have sung all manner of vegetable loves; Petrarch has celebrated the laurel, Chaucer the daisy, and Wordsworth the gallows-tree; it remained for the ex-pedagogue of Kirkcaldy to

become the volunteer laureate of the rod and to imagine a world created and directed by a divine Dr. Busby. We cannot help thinking that Mr. Carlyle might have learned something to his advantage by living a few years in the democracy which he scoffs at as heartily *a priori* as if it were the demagogism which Aristophanes derided from experience. The Hero, as Mr. Carlyle understands him, was a makeshift of the past; and the ideal of manhood is to be found hereafter in free communities, where the state shall at length sum up and exemplify in itself all those qualities which poets were forced to imagine and typify because they could not find them in the actual world.

In the earlier part of his literary career, Mr. Carlyle was the denouncer of shams, the preacher up of sincerity, manliness, and a living faith, instead of a droning ritual. He had intense convictions, and he made disciples. With a compass of diction unequalled by any other public performer of the time, ranging as it did from the unbookish freshness of the Scottish peasant to the most far-sought phrase of literary curiosity, with humor, pathos, and eloquence at will, it was no wonder that he found eager listeners in a world longing for a sensation, and forced to put up with the West-End gospel of "Pelham." If not a profound thinker, he had what was next best, — he felt profoundly, and his cry came out of the depths. The stern Calvinism of his early training was rekindled by his imagination to the old fervor of Wishart and Brown, and became a new phenomenon as he

reproduced it subtilized by German transcendentalism and German culture. Imagination, if it lay hold of a Scotchman, possesses him in the old demoniac sense of the word, and that hard logical nature, if the Hebrew fire once get fair headway in it, burns unquenchable as an anthracite coal-mine. But to utilize these sacred heats, to employ them, as a literary man is always tempted, to keep the domestic pot a-boiling, — is such a thing possible? Only too possible, we fear; and Mr. Carlyle is an example of it. If the languid public long for a sensation, the excitement of making one becomes also a necessity of the successful author, as the intellectual nerves grow duller and the old inspiration that came unbidden to the bare garret grows shier and shier of the comfortable parlor. As he himself said thirty years ago of Edward Irving, "Unconsciously, for the most part in deep unconsciousness, there was now the impossibility to live neglected, — to walk on the quiet paths where alone it is well with us. Singularity must henceforth succeed singularity. O foulest Circean draught, thou poison of Popular Applause! madness is in thee and death; thy end is Bedlam and the grave." Mr. Carlyle won his first successes as a kind of preacher in print. His fervor, his oddity of manner, his pugnacious paradox, drew the crowd; the truth, or, at any rate, the faith that underlay them all, brought also the fitter audience, though fewer. But the curse was upon him; he must attract, he must astonish. Thenceforth he has been forced to revamp his telling things; and

the oddity, as was inevitable, has become always odder, the paradoxes more paradoxical. No very large share of truth falls to the apprehension of any one man; let him keep it sacred, and beware of repeating it till it turn to falsehood on his lips by becoming ritual. Truth always has a bewitching savor of newness in it, and novelty at the first taste recalls that original sweetness to the tongue; but alas for him who would make the one a substitute for the other! We seem to miss of late in Mr. Carlyle the old sincerity. He has become the purely literary man, less concerned about what he says than about how he shall say it to best advantage. The Muse should be the companion, not the guide, says he whom Mr. Carlyle has pronounced "the wisest of this generation." What would be a virtue in the poet is a vice of the most fatal kind in the teacher, and, alas that we should say it! the very Draco of shams, whose code contained no penalty milder than capital for the most harmless of them, has become at last something very like a sham himself. Mr. Carlyle continues to be a voice crying in the wilderness, but no longer a voice with any earnest conviction behind it, or in a wilderness where there is other than imaginary privation. Hearing him rebuke us for being humbugs and impostors, we are inclined to answer, with the ambassador of Philip II., when his master reproached him with forgetting substance in ceremony, "Your Majesty forgets that you are only a ceremony yourself." And Mr. Carlyle's teaching, moreover, if teaching we may call it, belongs to what the great

German, whose disciple he is, condemned as the "literature of despair." An apostle to the gentiles might hope for some fruit of his preaching; but of what avail an apostle who shouts his message down the mouth of the pit to poor lost souls, whom he can positively assure only that it is impossible to get out? Mr. Carlyle lights up the lanterns of his Pharos after the ship is already rolling between the tongue of the sea and the grinders of the reef. It is very brilliant, and its revolving flashes touch the crests of the breakers with an awful picturesqueness; but in so desperate a state of things, even Dr. Syntax might be pardoned for being forgetful of the picturesque. The Toryism of Scott sprang from love of the past; that of Carlyle is far more dangerously infectious, for it is logically deduced from a deep disdain of human nature.

Browning has drawn a beautiful picture of an old king sitting at the gate of his palace to judge his people in the calm sunshine of that past which never existed outside a poet's brain. It is the sweetest of waking dreams, this of absolute power and perfect wisdom in one supreme ruler; but it is as pure a creation of human want and weakness, as clear a witness of mortal limitation and incompleteness, as the shoes of swiftness, the cloak of darkness, the purse of Fortunatus, and the *elixir vitæ*. It is the natural refuge of imaginative temperaments impatient of our blunders and shortcomings, and, given a complete man, all would submit to the divine right of his despotism. But alas! to every the most fortunate human birth hobbles up

that malign fairy who has been forgotten, with her fatal gift of imperfection! So far as my experience has gone, it has been the very opposite to Mr. Carlyle's. Instead of finding men disloyal to their natural leader, nothing has ever seemed to me so touching as the gladness with which they follow him, when they are sure they have found him at last. But a natural leader of the ideal type is not to be looked for *nisi dignus vindice nodus*. The Divine Forethought had been cruel in furnishing one for every petty occasion, and thus thwarting in all inferior men that priceless gift of reason, to develop which, and to make it one with free-will, is the highest use of our experience on earth. Mr. Carlyle was hard bestead and very far gone in his idolatry of mere *pluck*, when he was driven to choose Friedrich as a hero. A poet, and Mr. Carlyle is nothing else, is unwise who yokes Pegasus to a prosaic theme which no force of wing can lift from the dull earth. Charlemagne would have been a wiser choice, far enough in the past for ideal treatment, more manifestly the Siegfried of Anarchy, and in his rude way the refounder of that empire which is the ideal of despotism in the Western world.

Friedrich was doubtless a remarkable man, but surely very far below any lofty standard of heroic greatness. He was the last of the European kings who could look upon his kingdom as his private patrimony; and it was this estate of his, this piece of property, which he so obstinately and successfully defended. He had no idea of country as it

was understood by an ancient Greek or Roman, as it is understood by a modern Englishman or American; and there is something almost pitiful in seeing a man of genius like Mr. Carlyle fighting painfully over again those battles of the last century which settled nothing but the continuance of the Prussian monarchy, while he saw only the "burning of a dirty chimney" in the war which a great people was waging under his very eyes for the idea of nationality and orderly magistrature, and which fixed, let us hope, forever, a boundary-line on the map of history and of man's advancement toward self-conscious and responsible freedom. The true historical genius, as I conceive it, is that which can see the nobler meaning of events that are near him, as the true poet is he who detects the divine in the casual; and I somewhat suspect the depth of his insight into the past, who cannot recognize the godlike of to-day under that disguise in which it always visits us. Shall we hint to Mr. Carlyle that a man may look on an heroic age, as well as on an heroic master, with the eyes of a valet, as misappreciative certainly, though not so ignoble?

What Schiller says of a great poet, that he must be a citizen of his age as well as of his country, may be said inversely of a great king. He should be a citizen of his country as well as of his age. Friedrich was certainly the latter in its fullest sense; whether he was, or could have been, the former, in any sense, may be doubted. The man who spoke and wrote French in preference to his mother-tongue, who, dying when Goethe was al-

ready drawing toward his fortieth year, Schiller toward his thirtieth, and Lessing had been already five years in his grave, could yet see nothing but barbarism in German literature, had little of the old Teutonic fibre in his nature. The man who pronounced the Nibelungen Lied not worth a pinch of priming, had little conception of the power of heroic traditions in making heroic men, and especially in strengthening that instinct made up of so many indistinguishable associations which we call love of country. Charlemagne, when he caused the old songs of his people to be gathered and written down, showed a truer sense of the sources of national feeling and a deeper political insight. This want of sympathy points to the somewhat narrow limits of Friedrich's nature. In spite of Mr. Carlyle's adroit statement of the case, (and the whole book has an air of being the plea of a masterly advocate in mitigation of sentence,) we feel that his hero was essentially hard, narrow, and selfish. His popularity will go for little with any one who has studied the trifling and often fabulous elements that make up that singular compound. A bluntness of speech, a shabby uniform, a frugal camp equipage, a timely familiarity, may make a man the favorite of an army or a nation, — above all, if he have the knack of success. Moreover, popularity is much more easily won from above downward, and is bought at a better bargain by kings and generals than by other men. We doubt if Friedrich would have been liked as a private person, or even as an unsuccessful king. He ap-

parently attached very few people to himself, fewer even than his brutal old Squire Western of a father. His sister Wilhelmina is perhaps an exception. We say perhaps, for we do not know how much the heroic part he was called on to play had to do with the matter, and whether sisterly pride did not pass even with herself for sisterly affection. Moreover she was far from him; and Mr. Carlyle waves aside, in his generous fashion, some rather keen comments of hers on her brother's character when she visited Berlin after he had become king. Indeed, he is apt to deal rather contemptuously with all adverse criticism of his hero. I sympathize with his impulse in this respect, agreeing heartily as I do in Chaucer's scorn of those who "*gladlie* demen to the baser end" in such matters. But I am not quite sure if this be a safe method with the historian. He must doubtless be the friend of his hero if he would understand him, but he must be more the friend of truth if he would understand history. Mr. Carlyle's passion for truth is intense, as befits his temper, but it is that of a lover for his mistress. He would have her all to himself, and has a lover's conviction that no one is able, or even fit, to appreciate her but himself. He does well to despise the tittle-tattle of vulgar minds, but surely should not ignore *all* testimony on the other side. For ourselves, we think it not unimportant that Goethe's friend Knebel, a man not incapable of admiration, and who had served a dozen years or so as an officer of Friedrich's guard, should have bluntly called him "the tyrant."

Mr. Carlyle's history traces the family of his hero down from its beginnings in the picturesque chiaro-scuro of the Middle Ages. It was an able and above all a *canny* house, a Scotch version of the word *able*, which implies thrift and an eye to the main chance, the said main chance or chief end of man being altogether of this world. Friedrich, inheriting this family faculty in full measure, was driven, partly by ambition, partly by necessity, to apply it to war. He did so, with the success to be expected where a man of many expedients has the good luck to be opposed by men with few. He adds another to the many proofs that it is possible to be a great general without a spark of that divine fire which we call genius, and that good fortune in war results from the same prompt talent and unbending temper which lead to the same result in the peaceful professions. Friedrich had certainly more of the temperament of genius than Marlborough or Wellington; but not to go beyond modern instances, he does not impress us with the massive breadth of Napoleon, or attract us with the climbing ardor of Turenne. To compare him with Alexander, or Hannibal, or Cæsar, were absurd. The kingship that was in him, and which won Mr. Carlyle to be his biographer, is that of will merely, of rapid and relentless command. For organization he had a masterly talent; but he could not apply it to the arts of peace, both because he wanted experience and because the rash decision of the battle-field will not serve in matters which are governed by natural laws of growth. He seems, in-

deed, to have had a coarse, soldier's contempt for all civil distinction, altogether unworthy of a wise king, or even of a prudent one. He confers the title of Hofrath on the husband of a woman with whom his General Walrave is living in what Mr. Carlyle justly calls "brutish polygamy," and this at Walrave's request, on the ground that "a general's drab ought to have a handle to her name." Mr. Carlyle murmurs in a mild parenthesis that "we rather regret this"! (Vol. iii. p. 559.) This is his usual way of treating unpleasant matters, sidling by with a deprecating shrug of the shoulders. Not that he ever wilfully suppresses anything. On the contrary, there is no greater proof of his genius than the way in which, while he seems to paint a character with all its disagreeable traits, he contrives to win our sympathy for it, nay, almost our liking. This is conspicuously true of his portrait of Friedrich's father; and that he does not succeed in making Friedrich himself attractive is a strong argument with us that the fault is in the subject and not the artist.

The book, it is said, has been comparatively unsuccessful as a literary venture. Nor do we wonder at it. It is disproportionately long, and too much made up of those descriptions of battles, to read which seems even more difficult than to have won the victory itself, more disheartening than to have suffered the defeat. To an American, also, the warfare seemed Liliputian in the presence of a conflict so much larger in its proportions and significant in its results. The interest, moreover,

flags decidedly toward the close, where the reader cannot help feeling that the author loses breath somewhat painfully under the effort of so prolonged a course. Mr. Carlyle has evidently devoted to his task a labor that may be justly called prodigious. Not only has he sifted all the German histories and memoirs, but has visited every battle-field, and describes them with an eye for country that is without rival among historians. The book is evidently an abridgment of even more abundant collections, and yet, as it stands, the matter overburdens the work. It is a bundle of lively episodes rather than a continuous narrative. In this respect it contrasts oddly with the concinnity of his own earlier Life of Schiller. But the episodes *are* lively, the humor and pathos spring from a profound nature, the sketches of character are masterly, the seizure of every picturesque incident infallible, and the literary judgments those of a thorough scholar and critic. There is, of course, the usual amusing objurgation of Dryasdust and his rubbish-heaps, the usual assumption of omniscience, and the usual certainty of the Duchess de la Ferté being always in the right; yet I cannot help thinking that a little of Dryasdust's plodding exactness would have saved Fouquet eleven years of the imprisonment to which Mr. Carlyle condemns him, would have referred us to St. Simon rather than to Voltaire for the character of the brothers Belle-Ile, and would have kept clear of a certain ludicrous etymology of the name Antwerp, not to mention some other trifling slips of the like

nature. In conclusion, after saying, as an honest critic must, that "The History of Friedrich II. called Frederick the Great" is a book to be read in with more satisfaction than to be read through, after declaring that it is open to all manner of criticism, especially in point of moral purpose and tendency, I must admit with thankfulness that it has the one prime merit of being the work of a man who has every quality of a great poet except that supreme one of rhythm, which shapes both matter and manner to harmonious proportion, and that where it is good, it is good as only genius knows how to be.

With the gift of song, Carlyle would have been the greatest of epic poets since Homer. Without it, to modulate and harmonize and bring parts into their proper relation, he is the most amorphous of humorists, the most shining avatar of whim the world has ever seen. Beginning with a hearty contempt for shams, he has come at length to believe in brute force as the only reality, and has as little sense of justice as Thackeray allowed to women. I say *brute force* because, though the theory is that this force should be directed by the supreme intellect for the time being, yet all inferior wits are treated rather as obstacles to be contemptuously shoved aside than as ancillary forces to be conciliated through their reason. But, with all deductions, he remains the profoundest critic and the most dramatic imagination of modern times. Never was there a more striking example of that *ingenium perfervidum* long ago said to

be characteristic of his countrymen. His is one of the natures, rare in these latter centuries, capable of rising to a white heat; but once fairly kindled, he is like a three-decker on fire, and his shotted guns go off, as the glow reaches them, alike dangerous to friend or foe. Though he seems more and more to confound material with moral success, yet there is always something wholesome in his unswerving loyalty to reality, as he understands it. History, in the true sense, he does not and cannot write, for he looks on mankind as a herd without volition, and without moral force; but such vivid pictures of events, such living conceptions of character, we find nowhere else in prose. The figures of most historians seem like dolls stuffed with bran, whose whole substance runs out through any hole that criticism may tear in them, but Carlyle's are so real in comparison, that, if you prick them, they bleed. He seems a little wearied, here and there, in his Friedrich, with the multiplicity of detail, and does his filling-in rather shabbily; but he still remains in his own way, like his hero, the Only, and such episodes as that of Voltaire would make the fortune of any other writer. Though not the safest of guides in politics or practical philosophy, his value as an inspirer and awakener cannot be over-estimated. It is a power which belongs only to the highest order of minds, for it is none but a divine fire that can so kindle and irradiate. The debt due him from those who listened to the teachings of his prime for revealing to them what sublime reserves of power even the humblest

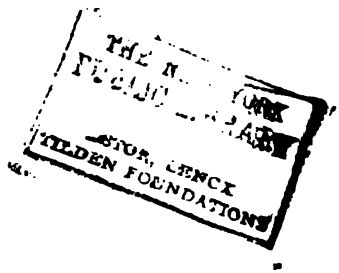
may find in manliness, sincerity, and self-reliance, can be paid with nothing short of reverential gratitude. As a purifier of the sources whence our intellectual inspiration is drawn, his influence has been second only to that of Wordsworth, if even to his. Indeed he has been in no fanciful sense the continuator of Wordsworth's moral teaching.

SWINBURNE'S TRAGEDIES

1866

ARE we really, then, to believe the newspapers for once, and to doff our critical nightcaps, in which we have comfortably overslept many similar rumors and false alarms, to welcome the advent of a new poet? New poets, to our thinking, are not very common, and the soft columns of the press often make dangerous concessions, for which the marble ones of Horace's day were too stony-hearted. Indeed, we have some well-grounded doubts whether England is precisely the country from which we have a right to expect that most precious of gifts just now. There is hardly enough fervor of political life there at present to ripen anything but the fruits of the literary forcing-house, so fair outwardly and so flavorless compared with those which grow in the hardier open air of a vigorous popular sentiment. Mere wealth of natural endowment is not enough; there must be also the coöperation of the time, of the public genius roused to a consciousness of itself by the necessity of asserting or defending the vital principle on which that consciousness rests, in order that a poet may rise to the highest level of his vocation. The great names of the last generation — Scott, Wordsworth, Byron — represent moods

Swinburne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TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

of national thought and feeling, and are therefore more or less truly British poets; just as Goethe, in whose capacious nature, open to every influence of earth and sky, the spiritual fermentation of the eighteenth century settled and clarified, is a European one. A sceptic might say, I think, with some justice, that poetry in England was passing now, if it have not already passed, into one of those periods of mere art without any intense convictions to back it, which lead inevitably, and by no long gradation, to the mannered and artificial. Browning, by far the richest nature of the time, becomes more difficult, draws nearer to the all-for-point fashion of the *concettisti*, with every poem he writes; the dainty trick of Tennyson cloys when caught by a whole generation of versifiers, as the *style* of a great poet never can be; and I have a foreboding that Clough, imperfect as he was in many respects, and dying before he had subdued his sensitive temperament to the sterner requirements of his art, will be thought a hundred years hence to have been the truest expression in verse of the moral and intellectual tendencies, the doubt and struggle towards settled convictions, of the period in which he lived. To make beautiful conceptions immortal by exquisiteness of phrase is to be a poet, no doubt; but to be a new poet is to feel and to utter that immanent life of things without which the utmost perfection of mere form is at best only wax or marble. He who can do both is the great poet.

Over "Chastelard, a Tragedy," we need not

spend much time. It is at best but the school exercise of a young poet learning to write, and who reproduces in his copy-book, more or less travestied, the copy that has been set for him at the page's head by the authors he most admires. Grace and even force of expression are not wanting, but there is the obscurity which springs from want of definite intention; the characters are vaguely outlined from memory, not drawn firmly from the living and the nude in actual experience of life; the working of passion is an *a priori* abstraction from a scheme in the author's mind; and there is no thought, but only a vehement grasping after thought. The hand is the hand of Swinburne, but the voice is the voice of Browning. With here and there a pure strain of sentiment, a genuine touch of nature, the effect of the whole is unpleasant with the faults of the worst school of modern poetry, — the physically intense school, as I should be inclined to call it, of which Mrs. Browning's "Aurora Leigh" is the worst example, whose muse is a *fast* young woman with the lavish ornament and somewhat overpowering perfume of the *demi-monde*, and which pushes expression to the last gasp of sensuous exhaustion. They forget that convulsion is not energy, and that words, to hold fire, must first catch it from vehement heat of thought, while no artificial fervors of phrase can make the charm work backward to kindle the mind of writer or reader. An over-mastering passion no longer entangles the spiritual being of its victim in the burning toils of a retribution foredoomed in its

own nature, purifying us with the terror and pity of a soul in its extremity, as the great masters were wont to set it before us; no, it must be fleshly, corporeal, must "bite with small white teeth" and draw blood, to satisfy the craving of our modern inquisitors, who torture language instead of wooing it to confess the secret of its witchcraft. That books written on this theory should be popular is one of the worst signs of the times; that they should be praised by the censors of literature shows how seldom criticism goes back to first principles, or is even aware of them, — how utterly it has forgotten its most earnest function of demolishing the high places where the unclean rites of Baal and Ashtaroth usurp on the worship of the one only True and Pure.

"Atalanta in Calydon" is in every respect better than its forerunner. It is a true poem, and seldom breaks from the maidenly reserve which should characterize the higher forms of poetry, even in the keenest energy of expression. If the blank verse be a little mannered and stiff, reminding one of Landor in his attempts to reproduce the antique, the lyrical parts are lyrical in the highest sense, graceful, flowing, and generally simple in sentiment and phrase. There are some touches of nature in the mother's memories of Althea, so sweetly pathetic that they go as right to the heart as they came from it, and are neither Greek nor English, but broadly human. And yet, when I had read the book through, I felt as if I were leaving a world of shadows, inhabited by less substantial

things than that nether realm of Homer where the very eidolon of Achilles is still real to us in its longings and regrets. These are not characters, but outlines after the Elgin marbles in the thinnest manner of Flaxman. There is not so much blood in the whole of them as would warm the little finger of one of Shakespeare's living and breathing conceptions. I could not help thinking of those exquisite verses addressed by Schiller to Goethe, in which, while he expresses a half-truth so eloquently as almost to make it seem a whole one, he touches unconsciously the weak point of their common striving after a Grecian instead of a purely human ideal. The result is an unreal thing.

> "Doch leicht gezimmert nur ist Thespis Wagen,
> Und er ist gleich dem acheront'schen Kahn;
> Nur Schatten und Idole kann er tragen,
> Und drängt das rohe Leben sich heran,
> So droht das leichte Fahrzeug umzuschlagen
> Das nur die flücht'gen Geister fassen kann;
> Der Schein soll nie die Wirklichkeit erreichen
> Und siegt Natur, so muss die Kunst entweichen."

The actors in the drama are unreal and shadowy, the motives which actuate them alien to our modern modes of thought and conceptions of character. To a Greek, the element of Fate, with which his imagination was familiar, while it heightened the terror of the catastrophe, would have supplied the place of that impulse in mere human nature which our habit of mind demands for its satisfaction. The fulfilment of an oracle, the anger of a deity, the arbitrary doom of some blind and purposeless power superior to man, the avenging of blood to

appease an injured ghost, any one of these might make that seem simply natural to a contemporary of Sophocles which is intelligible to us only by study and reflection. It is not a little curious that Shakespeare should have made the last of the motives we have just mentioned, which was conclusive for Orestes, insufficient for Hamlet, who so perfectly typifies the introversion and complexity of modern thought as compared with ancient, in dealing with the problems of life and action. It was not perhaps without intention (for who may venture to assume a want of intention in the world's highest poetic genius at its full maturity?) that Shakespeare brings in his hero fresh from the University of Wittenberg, where Luther, who entailed upon us the responsibility of private judgment, had been Professor. The dramatic motive in the "Electra" and "Hamlet" is essentially the same, but what a difference between the straightforward bloody-mindedness of Orestes and the metaphysical punctiliousness of the Dane! Yet each was natural in his several way, and each would have been unintelligible to the audience for which the other was intended. That Fate which the Greeks made to operate from without, we recognize at work within in some vice of character or hereditary predisposition. Hawthorne, the most profoundly ideal genius of these latter days, was continually returning, more or less directly, to this theme; and his "Marble Faun," whether consciously or not, illustrates that invasion of the æsthetic by the moral which has confused art by

dividing its allegiance, and dethroned the old dynasty without as yet firmly establishing the new in an acknowledged legitimacy.

"Atalanta in Calydon" shows that poverty of thought and profusion of imagery which are at once the defect and the compensation of all youthful poetry, even of Shakespeare's. It seems a paradox to say that there can be too much poetry in a poem, and yet this is a fault with which all poets begin, and which some never get over. But "Atalanta" is hopefully distinguished, in a rather remarkable way, from most early attempts, by a sense of form and proportion, which, if seconded by a seasonable ripening of other faculties, as we may fairly expect, gives promise of rare achievement hereafter. Mr. Swinburne's power of assimilating style, which is, perhaps, not so auspicious a symptom, strikes me as something marvellous. The argument of his poem, in its quaint archaism, would not need the change of a word or in the order of a period to have been foisted on Sir Thomas Malory as his own composition. The choosing a theme which Æschylus had handled in one of his lost tragedies is justified by a certain Æschylean flavor in the treatment. The opening, without deserving to be called a mere imitation, recalls that of the "Agamemnon," and the chorus has often an imaginative lift in it, an ethereal charm of phrase, of which it is the highest praise to say that it reminds us of him who soars over the other Greek tragedians like an eagle.

But in spite of many merits, I cannot help

asking myself, as I close the book, whether "Atalanta" can be called a success, and if so, whether it be a success in the right direction. The poem reopens a question which in some sort touches the very life of modern literature. I do not mean to renew the old quarrel of Fontenelle's day as to the comparative merits of ancients and moderns. That is an affair of taste, which does not admit of any authoritative settlement. My concern is about a principle which certainly demands a fuller discussion, and which is important enough to deserve it. Do we show our appreciation of the Greeks most wisely in attempting the mechanical reproduction of their forms, or by endeavoring to comprehend the thoughtful spirit of full-grown manhood in which they wrought, to kindle ourselves by the emulation of it, and to bring it to bear with all its plastic force upon our wholly new conditions of life and thought? It seems to me that the question is answered by the fact, patent in the history of all the fine arts, that every attempt at reproducing a bygone excellence by external imitation of it, or even by applying the rules which analytic criticism has formulated from the study of it, has resulted in producing the artificial, and not the artistic. That most subtile of all essences in physical organization, which eludes chemist, anatomist, and microscopist, the life, is in æsthetics not less shy of the critic, and will not come forth in obedience to his most learned spells, for the very good reason that it cannot, because in all works of art it is the joint product of the artist

and of the time. Faust may believe he is gazing on "the face that launched a thousand ships," but Mephistopheles knows very well that it is only shadows that he has the skill to conjure. He is not merely the spirit that ever denies, but the spirit also of discontent with the present, that material in which every man shall work who will achieve realities and not their hollow semblance. The true anachronism, in my opinion, is not in Shakespeare's making Ulysses talk as Lord Bacon might, but in attempting to make him speak in a dialect of thought utterly dead to all present comprehension. Ulysses was the type of long-headedness; and the statecraft of an Ithacan cateran would have seemed as childish to the age of Elizabeth and Burleigh as it was naturally sufficing to the first hearers of Homer. Ulysses, living in Florence during the fifteenth century, might have been Macchiavelli; in France, during the seventeenth, Cardinal Richelieu; in America, during the nineteenth, Abraham Lincoln, but not Ulysses. Truth to nature can be reached ideally, never historically; it must be a study from the life, and not from the scholiasts. Theocritus lets us into the secret of his good poetry, when he makes Daphnis tell us that he preferred his rock with a view of the Sicilian Sea to the kingdom of Pelops.

It is one of the marvels of the human mind, this sorcery which the fiend of technical imitation weaves about his victims, giving a phantasmal Helen to their arms, and making an image of the brain seem substance. Men still pain themselves

to write Latin verses, matching their wooden bits of phrase together as children do dissected maps, and measuring the value of what they have done, not by any standard of intrinsic merit, but by the difficulty of doing it. Petrarch expected to be known to posterity by his Africa. Gray hoped to make a Latin poem his monument. Goethe, who was classic in the only way it is now possible to be classic, in his "Hermann and Dorothea," and at least Propertian in his "Roman Idylls," wasted his time and thwarted his creative energy on the mechanical mock-antique of an unreadable "Achilleïs." Landor prized his waxen "Gebirus Rex" above all the natural fruits of his mind; and we have no doubt that, if some philosopher should succeed in accomplishing Paracelsus's problem of an artificial *homunculus*, he would dote on this misbegotten babe of his science, and think him the only genius of the family. We cannot overestimate the value of some of the ancient classics, but a certain amount of superstition about Greek and Latin has come down to us from the revival of learning, and seems to hold in mortmain the intellects of whoever has, at some time, got a smattering of them. Men quote a platitude in either of those tongues with a relish of conviction as droll to the uninitiated as the knighthood of freemasonry. Horace Walpole's nephew, the Earl of Orford, when he was in his cups, used to have Statius read aloud to him every night for two hours by a tipsy tradesman, whose hiccupings threw in here and there a kind of cæsural pause, and found some

strange mystery of sweetness in the disquantitied syllables. So powerful is this hallucination that we can conceive of *festina lente* as the favorite maxim of a Mississippi steamboat captain, and ἄριστον μὲν ὕδωρ cited as conclusive by a gentleman for whom the bottle before him reversed the wonder of the stereoscope, and substituted the Gascon *v* for the *b* in binocular.

Something of this singular superstition has infected the minds of those who confound the laws of conventional limitation which governed the practice of Greek authors in dramatic composition, laws adapted to the habits and traditions and preconceptions of their audience, with that sense of ideal form which made the Greeks masters in art to all succeeding generations. Aristophanes is beyond question the highest type of pure comedy, etherealizing his humor by the infusion, or intensifying it by the contrast of poetry, and deodorizing the personality of his sarcasm by a sprinkle from the clearest springs of fancy. His satire, aimed as it was at typical characteristics, is as fresh as ever; but we doubt whether an Aristophanic drama, retaining its exact form, but adapted to present events and personages, would keep the stage as it is kept by "The Rivals," for example, immeasurably inferior as that is in every element of genius except the prime one of liveliness. Something similar in purpose to the parabasis was essayed in one, at least, of the comedies of Beaumont and Fletcher, and in our time by Tieck; but it took, of necessity, a different form of expression,

and does not seem to have been successful. Indeed, the fact that what is called the legitimate drama of modern times in England, Spain, and France has been strictly a growth, and not a manufacture, that in each country it took a different form, and that, in all, the period of its culminating and beginning to decline might be measured by a generation, seems to point us toward some natural and inevitable law of human nature, and to show that, while the principles of art are immutable, their application must accommodate itself to the material supplied to them by the time and by the national character and traditions. The Spanish tragedy inclines more toward the lyrical, the French toward the epical, the English toward the historical, in the representation of real life; the Spanish and English agree in the Teutonic peculiarity of admitting the humorous antithesis of the clown, though in the one case he parodies the leading motive of the drama, and represents the self-consciousness of the dramatist, while in the other he heightens the tragic effect by contrast, (as in the grave-digging scene of Hamlet,) and suggests that stolid but wholesome indifference of the general life, of what, for want of a better term, we call Nature, to the sin and suffering, the weakness and misfortune of the individual man. All these nations had the same ancient examples before them, had the same reverence for antiquity, yet they involuntarily deviated, more or less happily, into originality, success, and the freedom of a living creativeness. The higher kinds of literature, the

only kinds that live on because they had life at the start, are not, then, it should seem, the fabric of scholarship, of criticism, diligently studying and as diligently copying the best models, but are much rather born of some genetic principle in the character of the people and the age which produce them. One drop of ruddy human blood puts more life into the veins of a poem, than all the delusive *aurum potabile* that can be distilled out of the choicest library.

The opera is the closest approach we have to the ancient drama in the essentials of structure and presentation; and could we have a *libretto* founded on a national legend and written by one man of genius to be filled out and accompanied by the music of another, we might hope for something of the same effect upon the stage. But themes of universal familiarity and interest are rare, — Don Giovanni and Faust, perhaps, most nearly, though not entirely, fulfilling the required conditions, — and men of genius rarer. The oratorio seeks to evade the difficulty by choosing Scriptural subjects, and it may certainly be questioned whether the day of popular mythology, in the sense in which it subserves the purposes of epic or dramatic poetry, be not gone by forever. Longfellow is driven to take refuge among the red men, and Tennyson in the Cambro-Breton cyclus of Arthur; but it is impossible that such themes should come so intimately home to us as the semi-fabulous stories of their own ancestors did to the Greeks. The most successful attempt

at reproducing the Greek tragedy, both in theme and treatment, is the "Samson Agonistes," as it is also the most masterly piece of English versification. Goethe admits that it alone, among modern works, has caught life from the breath of the antique spirit. But he failed to see, or at least to give, the reason of it; probably failed to see it, or he would never have attempted the "Iphigenie." Milton not only subjected himself to the structural requirements of the Attic tragedy, but with a true poetic instinct availed himself of the striking advantage it had in the choice of a subject. No popular tradition lay near enough to him for his purpose; none united in itself the essential requisites of human interest and universal belief. He accordingly chose a Jewish mythus, very near to his own heart as a blind prisoner, betrayed by his wife, among the Philistines of the Restoration, and familiar to the earliest associations of his readers. This subject, and this alone, met all the demands both of living poetic production and of antique form, — the action grandly simple, the personages few, the protagonist at once a victim of divine judgment and an executor of divine retribution, an intense personal sympathy in the poet himself, and no strangeness to the habitual prepossessions of those he addressed to be overcome before he could touch their hearts or be sure of aid from their imaginations. To compose such a drama on such a theme was to *be* Greek, and not to counterfeit it; for Samson was to Milton traditionally just what

Herakles was to Sophocles, and personally far more. The "Agonistes" is still fresh and strong as morning, but where are "Caractacus" and "Elfrida"? Nay, where is the far better work of a far abler man, where is "Merope"? If the frame of mind which performs a deliberate experiment were the same as that which produces poetry vitalized through and through by the conspiring ardors of every nobler passion and power of the soul, then "Merope" might have had some little space of life. But without color, without harmonious rhythm of movement, with less passion than survived in an average Grecian ghost, and all this from the very theory of her creation, she has gone back, a shadow, to join her shadowy Italian and French namesakes in that limbo of things that would be and cannot be. Mr. Arnold but retraces, in his Preface to "Merope," the arguments of Mason in the letters prefixed to his classical experiments. What finds defenders, but not readers, may be correct, classic, right in principle, but it is not poetry of that absolute kind which may and does help men, but needs no help of theirs; and such surely we have a right to demand in tragedy, if nowhere else. I should not speak so unreservedly if I did not set a high value on Mr. Arnold and his poetic gift. But "Merope" has that one fault against which the very gods, we are told, strive in vain. It is dull, and the seed of this dulness lay in the system on which it was written.

Pseudo-classicism takes two forms. Sometimes,

as Mr. Landor has done, it attempts truth of detail to ancient scenery and manners, which may be attained either by hard reading and good memory, or at a cheaper rate from such authors as Becker. The "Moretum," once attributed to Virgil, and the idyll of Theocritus lately chosen as a text by Mr. Arnold, are interesting, because they describe real things; but the mock-antique, if not true, is nothing, and how true such poems are likely to be we can judge by "Punch's" success at Yankeeisms, by all England's accurate appreciation of the manners and minds of a contemporary people one with herself in language, laws, religion, and literature. The eye is the only note-book of the true poet; but a patchwork of second-hand memories is a laborious futility, hard to write and harder to read, with about as much nature in it as a dialogue of the Deipnosophists. Alexander's bushel of peas was a criticism worthy of Aristotle's pupil. We should reward such writing with the gift of a classical dictionary. In this idyllic kind of poetry also we have a classic, because Goldsmith went to nature for his "Deserted Village," and borrowed of tradition nothing but the poetic diction in which he described it. This is the only method by which a poet may surely reckon on ever becoming an ancient himself. When I heard it said once that a certain poem might have been written by Simonides, I could not help thinking that, if it were so, then it was precisely what Simonides could never have written, since he looked at the world through his

own eyes, not through those of Linus or Hesiod, and thought his own thoughts, not theirs, or we should never have had him to imitate.

Objections of the same nature, but even stronger, lie against a servile copying of the form and style of the Greek tragic drama, and yet more against the selection of a Greek theme. As I said before, the life we lead and the views we take of it are more complex than those of men who lived five centuries before Christ. They may be better or worse, but, at any rate, they are different, and irremediably so. The idea and the form in which it naturally embodies itself, mutually sustaining and invigorating each other, cannot be divided without endangering the lives of both. For in all real poetry the form is not a garment, but a body. Our very passion has become metaphysical, and speculates upon itself. Their simple and downright way of thinking loses all its savor when we assume it to ourselves by an effort of thought. Human nature, it is true, remains always the same, but the displays of it change; the habits which are a second nature modify it inwardly as well as outwardly, and what moves it to passionate action in one age may leave it indifferent in the next. Between us and the Greeks lies the grave of their murdered paganism, making our minds and theirs irreconcilable. Christianity as steadily intensifies the self-consciousness of man as the religion of the Greeks must have turned their thoughts away from themselves to the events of this life and the phenomena of nature. We cannot even conceive of

their conception of Phoibos with any plausible assurance of coming near the truth. To take lesser matters, since the invention of printing and the cheapening of books have made the thought of all ages and nations the common property of educated men, we cannot so dis-saturate our minds of it as to be keenly thrilled in the modern imitation by those commonplaces of proverbial lore in which the chorus and secondary characters are apt to indulge, though in the original they may interest us as being natural and characteristic. In the German-silver of the modern we get something of this kind, which does not please us the more by being cut up into single lines that recall the outward semblance of some pages in Sophocles. We find it cheaper to make a specimen than to borrow one.

CHORUS. Foolish who bites off nose, his face to spite.
OUTIS. Who fears his fate, him Fate shall one day spurn.
CHORUS. The gods themselves are pliable to Fate.
OUTIS. The strong self-ruler owns no other sway.
CHORUS. Sometimes the shortest way goes most about.
OUTIS. Why fetch a compass, having stars within?
CHORUS. A shepherd once, I know that stars may set.
OUTIS. That thou led'st sheep fits not for leading men.
CHORUS. To sleep-sealed eyes the wolf-dog barks in vain.

We protest that we have read something very like this, we will not say where, and we might call it the battledoor and shuttlecock style of dialogue, except that the players do not seem to have any manifest relation to each other, but each is intent on keeping his own bit of feathered cork continually in the air.

The first sincerely popular yearning toward anti-

quity, the first germ of Schiller's "Götter Griechenland's" is to be found in the old poem of Tannhäuser, very nearly coincident with the beginnings of the Reformation. And if we might allegorize it, we should say that it typified precisely that longing after Venus, under her other name of Charis, which represents the relation in which modern should stand to ancient art. It is the virile grace of the Greeks, their sense of proportion, their distaste for the exaggerated, their exquisite propriety of phrase, which steadies imagination without cramping it, — it is these that we should endeavor to assimilate without the loss of our own individuality. We should quicken our sense of form by intelligent sympathy with theirs, and not stiffen it into formalism by a servile surrender of what is genuine in us to what *was* genuine in them. "A pure form," says Schiller, "helps and sustains, an impure one hinders and shatters." But we should remember that the spirit of the age must enter as a modifying principle, not only into ideas, but into the best manner of their expression. The old bottles will not always serve for the new wine. A principle of life is the first requirement of all art, and it can only be communicated by the touch of the time and a simple faith in it; all else is circumstantial and secondary. The Greek tragedy passed through the three natural stages of poetry, — the imaginative in Æschylus, the thoughtfully artistic in Sophocles, the sentimental in Euripides, — and then died. If people could only learn the general applicability to periods and schools of

what young Mozart says of Gellert, that "he had written no poetry *since* his death"! No effort to raise a defunct past has ever led to anything but just enough galvanic twitching of the limbs to remind us unpleasantly of life. The romantic movement of the school of German poets which succeeded Goethe and Schiller ended in extravagant unreality, and Goethe himself, with his unerring common-sense, has given us, in the second part of Faust, the result of his own and Schiller's common striving after a Grecian ideal. Euphorion, the child of Faust and Helen, falls dead at their feet; and Helen herself soon follows him to the shades, leaving only her mantle in the hands of her lover. This, he is told, shall lift him above the earth. We fancy we can interpret the symbol. Whether we can or not, it is certainly suggestive of thought that the only immortal production of the greatest of recent poets was conceived and carried out in that Gothic spirit and form from which he was all his life struggling to break loose.

THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF JAMES GATES PERCIVAL

1867

THIS is an interesting and in many respects instructive book. Mr. Ward has done his work, as is fitting, in a loving spirit; and if he over-estimate both what Percival was and what he did, he enables us to form our own judgment by letting him so far as possible speak for himself. The book gives a rather curious picture of what the life of a man of letters is likely to be in a country not yet ripe for literary production, especially if he be not endowed with the higher qualities which command and can wait for that best of all successes which comes slowly. In a generation where everybody can write verses, and where certain modes of thought and turns of phrase have become so tyrannous that it is as hard to distinguish between the productions of one minor poet and another as among those of so many Minnesingers or Troubadours, there is a demand for only two things, — for what chimes with the moment's whim of popular sentiment and is forgotten when that has changed, or for what is never an anachronism, because it slakes or seems to slake the eternal thirst of our nature for those ideal waters that glimmer before us and still before

us in ever-renewing mirage. Percival met neither of these conditions. With a nature singularly unplastic, unsympathetic, and self-involved, he was incapable of receiving into his own mind the ordinary emotions of men and giving them back in music; and with a lofty conception of the object and purposes of poesy, he had neither the resolution nor the power which might have enabled him to realize it. He offers as striking an example as could be found of the poetic temperament unballasted with those less obvious qualities which make the poetic faculty. His verse carries every inch of canvas that diction and sentiment can crowd, but the craft is cranky, and we miss that deep-grasping keel of reason which alone can steady and give direction. His mind drifts, too waterlogged to answer the helm, and in his longer poems, like "Prometheus," half the voyage is spent in trying to make up for a leeway which becomes at last irretrievable. If he had a port in view when he set out, he seems soon to give up all hope of ever reaching it; and wherever we open the log-book, we find him running for nowhere in particular, as the wind happens to lead, or lying-to in the merest gale of verbiage. The truth is, that Percival was led to the writing of verse by a sentimental desire of the mind, and not by that concurring instinct of all the faculties which is a self-forgetting passion of the entire man. Too excitable to possess his subject fully, as a man of mere talent even may often do, he is not possessed by it as the man of genius is, and seems helplessly striving, the greater part of the time, to

make out what, in the name of common or uncommon sense, he is after. With all the stock properties of verse whirling and dancing about his ears puffed out to an empty show of life, the reader of much of his blank verse feels as if a mob of well-draperied clothes-lines were rioting about him in all the unwilling ecstasy of a thunder-gust.

Percival, living from 1795 to 1856, arrived at manhood just as the last war with England had come to an end. Poor, shy, and proud, there is nothing in his earlier years that might not be paralleled in those of hundreds of sensitive boys who gradually get the nonsense shaken out of them in the rough school of life. The length of the schooling needful in his case is what makes it peculiar. Not till after he was fifty, if even then, did he learn that the world never takes a man at his own valuation, and never pays money for what it does not want, or think it wants. It did not want his poetry, simply because it was not, is not, and by no conceivable power of argument can be made, interesting, — the first duty of every artistic product. Percival, who would have thought his neighbors mad if they had insisted on his buying twenty thousand refrigerators merely because they had been at the trouble of making them, and found it convenient to turn them into cash, could never forgive the world for taking this business view of the matter in his own case. He went on doggedly, making refrigerators of every possible pattern, and comforted himself with the thought of a wiser posterity, which should have learned that the pur-

pose of poetry is to cool and not to kindle. His "Mind," which is on the whole perhaps the best of his writings, vies in coldness with the writings of his brother doctor, Akenside, whose "Pleasures of Imagination" are something quite other than pleasing of reality. If there be here and there a semblance of pale fire, it is but the reflection of moonshine upon ice. Akenside is respectable, because he really had something new to say, in spite of his pompous, mouthing way of saying it; but when Percival says it over again, it is a little too much. In his more ambitious pieces, and it is curious how literally the word "pieces" applies to all he did, he devotes himself mainly to telling us what poetry ought to be, as if mankind were not always more than satisfied with any one who fulfils the true office of poet, by showing them, with the least possible fuss, what it is. Percival was a professor of poetry rather than a poet, and we are not surprised at the number of lectures he reads us, when we learn that in early life he was an excellent demonstrator of anatomy, whose subject must be dead before his business with it begins. His interest in poetry was always more or less scientific. He was forever trying experiments in matter and form, especially the latter. And these were especially unhappy, because it is plain that he had no musical ear, or at best a very imperfect one. His attempts at classical metres are simply unreadable, whether as verse or prose. He contrives to make even the Sapphic so, which when we read it in Latin moves featly to our modern accentuation. Let any one

who wishes to feel the difference between ear and no ear compare Percival's specimens with those in the same kind of Coleridge, who had the finest metrical sense since Milton. We take this very experimenting to be a sufficient proof that Percival's faculty, such as it was, and we do not rate it highly, was artificial, and not innate. The true poet is much rather experimented upon by life and nature, by joy and sorrow, by beauty and defect, till it be found out whether he have any hidden music in him that can sing them into an accord with the eternal harmony which we call God.

It is easy to trace the literary influences to which the mind of Percival was in turn subjected. Early in life we find a taint of Byronism, which indeed does not wholly disappear to the last. There is among his poems "An Imprecation," of which a single stanza will suffice as a specimen: —

> "Wrapped in sheets of gory lightning,
> While cursed night-hags ring thy knell,
> May the arm of vengeance bright'ning,
> O'er thee wave the sword of hell!"

If we could fancy Laura Matilda shut up tipsy in the watch-house, we might suppose her capable of this melodious substitute for swearing. We confess that we cannot read it without laughing, after learning from Mr. Ward that its Salmoneus-thunderbolts were launched at the comfortable little city of Hartford, because the poet fancied that the inhabitants thereof did not like him or his verses so much as he himself did. There is something deliciously ludicrous in the conception of night-hags

ringing the orthodox bell of the Second Congregational or First Baptist Meeting-house to summon the parishioners to witness these fatal consequences of not reading Percival's poems. Nothing less than the fear of some such catastrophe could compel the perusal of the greater part of them. Next to Byron comes Moore, whose cloying sentimentalism and too facile melody are recalled by the subject and treatment of very many of the shorter lyrics of Percival. In "Prometheus" it is Shelley who is paramount for the time, and Shelley at his worst period, before his unwieldy abundance of incoherent words and images, that were merely words and images without any meaning of real experience to give them solidity, had been compressed in the stricter moulds of thought and study. In the blank verse again, we encounter Wordsworth's tone and sentiment. These were no good models for Percival, who always improvised, and who seems to have thought verse the great distinction between poetry and prose. Percival got nothing from Shelley but the fatal copiousness which is his vice, nothing from Wordsworth but that tendency to preach at every corner about a sympathy with nature which is not his real distinction, and which becomes a wearisome cant at second-hand. Shelley and Wordsworth are both stilted, though in different ways. Shelley wreathed his stilts with flowers; while Wordsworth, protesting against the use of them as sinful, mounts his solemnly at last, and stalks away conscientiously eschewing whatever would serve to hide the naked wood, — nay,

was it not Gray's only that were scandalous, and were not his own, modelled upon those of the sainted Cowper, of strictly orthodox pattern after all? Percival, like all imitators, is caught by the defects of what he copies, and exaggerates them. With him the stilts are the chief matter; and getting a taller pair than either of his predecessors, he lifts his commonplace upon them only to make it more drearily conspicuous. Shelley has his gleams of unearthly wildfire, Wordsworth is by fits the most deeply inspired man of his generation; but Percival has no lucid interval. He is pertinaciously and unappeasably dull, — as dull as a comedy of Goethe. He never in his life wrote a rememberable verse. I should not have thought this of any consequence now, for we need not try to read him, did not Mr. Ward with amusing gravity all along assume that he was a great poet. There was scarce timber enough in him for the making of a Tiedge or a Hagedorn, both of whom he somewhat resembles.

Percival came to maturity at an unfortunate time for a man so liable to self-delusion. Leaving college with so imperfect a classical training (in spite of the numerous "testimonials" cited by Mr. Ward) that he was capable of laying the accent on the second syllable of Pericles, he seems never to have systematically trained even such faculty as was in him, but to have gone on to the end mistaking excitability of brain for wholesome exercise of thought. The consequence is a prolonged immaturity, which makes his latest volume, published in

1843, as crude and as plainly wanting in enduring quality as the first number of his "Clio." We have the same old complaints of neglected genius, as if genius could ever be neglected so long as it has the perennial consolation of its own divine society, the same wilted sentiment, the same feeling about for topics of verse in which he may possibly find that inspiration from without which the true poet cannot flee from in himself. These tedious wailings about heavenly powers suffocating in the heavy atmosphere of an uncongenial, unrecognizing world, and Percival is profuse of them, are simply an advertisement to whoever has ears, of some innate disability in the man who utters them. Heavenly powers know very well how to take care of themselves. The poor "World," meaning thereby that small fraction of society which has any personal knowledge of an author or his affairs, has had great wrong done it in such matters. It is not, and never was, the powers of a man that it neglects, — it could not if it would, — but his weaknesses, and especially the publication of them, of which it grows weary. It can never supply any man with what is wanting in himself, and the attempt to do so only makes bad worse. If a man can find the proof of his own genius only in public appreciation, still worse, if his vanity console itself with taking it as an evidence of rare qualities in himself that his fellow-mortals are unable to see them, it is all up with him. The "World" resolutely refused to find Wordsworth entertaining, and it refuses still, on good grounds; but the genius

that was in him bore up unflinchingly, would take no denial, got its claim admitted on all hands, and impregnated at last the literature of an entire generation, though *habitans in sicco*, if ever genius did. But Percival seems to have satisfied himself with a syllogism something like this: Men of genius are neglected; the more neglect, the more genius; I am altogether neglected, — *ergo*, wholly made up of that priceless material.

The truth was that he suffered rather from over-appreciation; and "when," says a nameless old Frenchman, "I see a man go up like a rocket, I expect before long to see the stick come down." The times were singularly propitious to mediocrity. As in Holland one had only to

> "Invent a shovel and be a magistrate,"

so here to write a hundred blank verses was to be immortal, till somebody else wrote a hundred and fifty blanker ones. It had been resolved unanimously that we must and would have a national literature. England, France, Spain, Italy, each already had one, Germany was getting one made as fast as possible, and Ireland vowed that she once had one far surpassing them all. To be respectable, we must have one also, and that speedily. We forgot that artistic literature, the only literature possible under our modern conditions, thrives best in an air laden with tradition, in a soil mellow with immemorial culture, in the temperature steady yet stimulating of historic and national associations. We had none of these, but Sydney

Smith's scornful question, "Who reads an American book?" tingled in our ears. Surely never was a young nation setting forth jauntily to seek its fortune so dumfounded as Brother Jonathan when John Bull cried gruffly from the roadside, "Stand, and deliver a national literature!" After fumbling in his pockets, he was obliged to confess that he had n't one about him at the moment, but vowed that he had left a first-rate one at home which he would have fetched along — only it was so everlasting heavy.

If the East should fail, as judged by European standards it seemed to have done, it was resolved that a poet should come out of the West, fashioned on a scale somewhat proportioned to our geographical pretensions. Our rivers, forests, mountains, cataracts, prairies, and inland seas were to find in him their antitype and voice. Shaggy he was to be, brown-fisted, careless of proprieties, unhampered by tradition, his Pegasus of the half-horse, half-alligator breed. By him at last the epos of the New World was to be fitly sung, the great tragi-comedy of democracy put upon the stage for all time. It was a cheap vision, for it cost no thought; and, like all judicious prophecy, it muffled itself from criticism in the loose drapery of its terms. Till the advent of this splendid apparition, who should dare affirm positively that he would never come? that, indeed, he was impossible? And yet his impossibility was demonstrable, nevertheless.

Supposing a great poet to be born in the West,

though he would naturally levy upon what had always been familiar to his eyes for his images and illustrations, he would almost as certainly look for his ideal somewhere outside of the life that lay immediately about him. Life in its large sense, and not as it is temporarily modified by manners or politics, is the only subject of the poet; and though its elements lie always close at hand, yet in its unity it seems always infinitely distant, and the difference of angle at which it is seen in India and in Minnesota is almost inappreciable. Moreover, a rooted discontent seems always to underlie all great poetry, if it be not even the motive of it. The Iliad and the Odyssey paint manners that are only here and there incidentally true to the actual, but which in their larger truth had either never existed or had long since passed away. Had Dante's scope been narrowed to contemporary Italy, the *Divina Commedia* would have been a picture-book merely. But his theme was Man, and the vision that inspired him was of an Italy that never was nor could be, his political theories as abstract as those of Plato or Spinoza. Shakespeare shows us less of the England that then was than any other considerable poet of his time. The struggle of Goethe's whole life was to emancipate himself from Germany, and fill his lungs for once with a more universal air.

Yet there is always a flavor of the climate in these rare fruits, some gift of the sun peculiar to the region that ripened them. If we are ever to have a national poet, let us hope that his nationality

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will be of this subtile essence, something that shall make him unspeakably nearer to us, while it does not provincialize him for the rest of mankind. The popular recipe for compounding him would give us, perhaps, the most sublimely furnished bore in human annals. The novel aspects of life under our novel conditions may give some freshness of color to our literature; but democracy itself, which many seem to regard as the necessary Lucina of some new poetic birth, is altogether too abstract an influence to serve for any such purpose. If any American author may be looked on as in some sort the result of our social and political ideal, it is Emerson, who, in his emancipation from the traditional, in the irresponsible freedom of his speculation, and his faith in the absolute value of his own individuality, is certainly, to some extent, typical; but if ever author was inspired by the past, it is he, and he is as far as possible from the shaggy hero of prophecy. Of the sham-shaggy, who have tried the trick of Jacob upon us, we have had quite enough, and may safely doubt whether this satyr of masquerade is to be our representative singer. Were it so, it would not be greatly to the credit of democracy as an element of æsthetics. But we may safely hope for better things.

The themes of poetry have been pretty much the same from the first; and if a man should ever be born among us with a great imagination, and the gift of the right word, — for it is these, and not sublime spaces, that make a poet, — he will be original rather in spite of democracy than in con-

sequence of it, and will owe his inspiration quite as much to the accumulations of the Old World as to the promises of the New. But for a long while yet the proper conditions will be wanting, not, perhaps, for the birth of such a man, but for his development and culture. At present, with the largest reading population in the world, perhaps no country ever offered less encouragement to the higher forms of art or the more thorough achievements of scholarship. Even were it not so, it would be idle to expect us to produce any literature so peculiarly our own as was the natural growth of ages less communicative, less open to every breath of foreign influence. Literature tends more and more to become a vast commonwealth, with no dividing lines of nationality. Any more Cids, or Songs of Roland, or Nibelungens, or Kalewalas are out of the question, — nay, anything at all like them; for the necessary insulation of race, of country, of religion, is impossible, even were it desirable. Journalism, translation, criticism, and facility of intercourse tend continually more and more to make the thought and turn of expression in cultivated men identical all over the world. Whether we like it or not, the costume of mind and body is gradually becoming of one cut. When, therefore, the young Lochinvar comes out of the West, his steed may be the best in all the wide border, but his pedigree will run back to Arabia, and there will be no cross of the saurian in him. *A priori*, we should expect of the young Western poet that he would aim rather at elegance and refinement

than at a display of the rude vigor that is supposed to be his birthright; for to him culture will seem the ideal thing, and, in a country without a past, tradition will charm all the more that it speaks with a foreign accent, and stirs the gypsy blood of imagination.

Sixty years ago, our anxiety to answer Sydney Smith's question showed that we felt keenly the truth implied in it, — that a nation was not to be counted as a moral force which had not fulfilled the highest demands of civilization. In our hurry to prove that we had done so we forgot the conditions that rendered it impossible. That we were not yet, in any true sense, a nation; that we wanted that literary and social atmosphere which is the breath of life to all artistic production; that our scholarship, such as it was, was mostly of that theological sort which acts like a prolonged drouth upon the brain; that our poetic fathers were Joel Barlow and Timothy Dwight; all this was nothing to the purpose; a literature adapted to the size of the country was what we must and would have. Given the number of square miles, the length of the rivers, the size of the lakes, and you have the greatness of the literature we were bound to produce without further delay. If that little dribble of an Avon had succeeded in engendering Shakespeare, what a giant might we not look for from the mighty womb of Mississippi! Physical Geography for the first time took her rightful place as the tenth and most inspiring Muse. A glance at the map would satisfy the most incredulous that

she had done her best for us, and should we be wanting to the glorious opportunity? Not we indeed! So surely as Franklin invented the art of printing, and Fulton the steam-engine, we would invent us a great poet in time to send the news by the next packet to England, and teach her that we were her masters in arts as well as in arms.

Percival was only too ready to be invented, and he forthwith produced his bale of verses from a loom capable of turning off a hitherto unheard-of number of yards to the hour, and perfectly adapted to the amplitude of our territory, inasmuch as it was manufactured on the theory of covering the largest surface with the least possible amount of meaning that would hold words together. He was as ready to accept the perilous emprise, and as loud in asserting his claim thereto, as Sir Kay used to be, and with much the same result. Our critical journals — and America certainly *has* led the world in a department of letters which of course requires no outfit but the power to read and write, gratuitously furnished by our public schools — received him with a shout of welcome. Here came the true deliverer at last, mounted on a steed to which he himself had given the new name of "Pegāsus," — for we were to be original in everything, — and certainly blowing his own trumpet with remarkable vigor of lungs. Solitary enthusiasts, who had long awaited this sublime avatar, addressed him in sonnets which he accepted with a gravity beyond all praise. (To be sure, even Mr. Ward seems to allow that his sense of

humor was hardly equal to his other transcendent endowments.) His path was strewn with laurel — of the native variety, altogether superior to that of the Old World, at any rate not precisely like it. Verses signed "P.," as like each other as two peas, and as much like poetry as that vegetable is like a peach, were watched for in the corner of a newspaper as an astronomer watches for a new planet. There was never anything so comically unreal since the crowning in the Capitol of Messer Francesco Petrarca, Grand Sentimentalist in Ordinary at the Court of King Robert of Sicily. Unhappily, Percival took it all quite seriously. There was no praise too ample for the easy elasticity of his swallow. He believed himself as gigantic as the shadow he cast on these rolling mists of insubstantial adulation, and life-long he could never make out why *his* fine words refused to butter his parsnips for him, nay, to furnish both parsnips and sauce. While the critics were debating precisely how many of the prime qualities of the great poets of his own and preceding generations he combined in his single genius, and in what particular respects he surpassed them all, — a point about which he himself seems never to have had any doubts, — the public, which could read Scott and Byron with avidity, and which was beginning even to taste Wordsworth, found his verses inexpressibly wearisome. They would not throng to subscribe for a collected edition of those works which singly had been too much for them. With whatever dulness of sense they may be charged, they have a remarkably keen

scent for tediousness, and will have none of it unless in a tract or sermon, where, of course, it is to be expected and is also edifying. Percival never forgave the public; but it was the critics that he never should have forgiven, for of all the maggots that can make their way into the brains throngh the ears, there is none so disastrous as the persuasion that you are a great poet. There is surely something in the construction of the ears of small authors which lays them specially open to the inroads of this pest. It tickles pleasantly while it eats away the fibre of will, and incapacitates a man for all honest commerce with realities. Unhappily its insidious titillation seems to have been Percival's one great pleasure during life.

I began by saying that the book before me was interesting and instructive; but I meant that it was so not so much from any positive merits of its own as by the lesson which almost every page of it suggests. To those who have some knowledge of the history of literature, or some experience in life, it is from beginning to end a history of weakness mistaking great desires for great powers. If poetry, in Bacon's noble definition of it, "adapt the shows of things to the desires of the mind," sentimentalism is equally skilful in making realities shape themselves to the cravings of vanity. The theory that the poet is a being above the world and apart from it is true of him as an observer only who applies to the phenomena about him the test of a finer and more spiritual sense. That he is a creature divinely set apart from his fellow-men

by a mental organization that makes them mutually unintelligible to each other is in flat contradiction with the lives of those poets universally acknowledged as greatest. Dante, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Calderon, Milton, Molière, Goethe, — in what conceivable sense is it true of them that they wanted the manly qualities which made them equal to the demands of the world in which they lived? That a poet should assume, as Victor Hugo used to do, that he is a reorganizer of the moral world, and that works cunningly adapted to the popular whim of the time form part of some mysterious system which is to give us a new heaven and a new earth, and to remodel laws of art which are as unchangeable as those of astronomy, can do no very great harm to any one but the author himself, who will thereby be led astray from his proper function, and from the only path to legitimate and lasting success. But when the theory is carried a step further, and we are asked to believe, as in Percival's case, that, because a man can write verses, he is exempt from that inexorable logic of life and circumstance to which all other men are subjected, and to which it is wholesome for them that they should be, then it becomes mischievous, and calls for a protest from all those who have at heart the interests of good morals and healthy literature. It is the theory of idlers and *dilettanti*, of fribbles in morals and declaimers in verse, which a young man of real power may dally with during some fit of mental indigestion, but which when accepted by a mature man, and

carried along with him through life, is a sure mark of feebleness and of insincere dealing with himself. Percival is a good example of a class of authors unhappily too numerous in these latter days. In Europe the natural growth of a world ill at ease with itself and still nervous with the frightful palpitation of the French Revolution, they are but feeble exotics in our healthier air. Without faith or hope, and deprived of that outward support in the habitual procession of events and in the authoritative limitations of thought which in ordinary times gives steadiness to feeble and timid intellects, they are turned inward, and forced, liked Hudibras's sword,

> "To eat into themselves, for lack
> Of other thing to hew and hack."

Compelled to find within them that stay which had hitherto been supplied by creeds and institutions, they learned to attribute to their own consciousness the grandeur which belongs of right only to the mind of the human race, slowly endeavoring after an equilibrium between its desires and the external conditions under which they are attainable. Hence that exaggeration of the individual, and depreciation of the social man, which has become the cant of modern literature. Abundance of such phenomena accompanied the rise of what was called Romanticism in Germany and France, reacting to some extent even upon England, and consequently upon America. The smaller poets erected themselves into a kind of guild, to which all were admitted who gave proof

of a certain feebleness of character which rendered them superior to their grosser fellow-men. It was a society of cripples undertaking to teach the new generation how to walk. Meanwhile, the object of their generous solicitude, what with clinging to Mother Past's skirts, and helping itself by every piece of household furniture it could lay hands on, learned, after many a tumble, to get on its legs and to use them as other generations had done before it. Percival belonged to this new order of bards, weak in the knees, and thinking it healthy exercise to climb the peaks of Dreamland. To the vague and misty views attainable from those sublime summits into his own vast interior, his reports in blank verse and otherwise did ample justice, but failed to excite the appetite of mankind. He spent his life, like others of his class, in proclaiming himself a neglected Columbus, ever ready to start on his voyage when the public would supply the means of building his ships. Meanwhile, to be ready at a moment's warning, he packs his mind pellmell like a carpet-bag, wraps a geologist's hammer in a shirt with a Byron collar, does up Volney's "Ruins" with an odd volume of Wordsworth, and another of Bell's "Anatomy" in a loose sheet of Webster's Dictionary, jams Moore's poems between the leaves of Bopp's Grammar, — and forgets only such small matters as combs and brushes. It never seems to have entered his head that the gulf between genius and its new world is never too wide for a stout swimmer. Like all sentimentalists, he re-

versed the process of nature, which makes it a part of greatness that it is a simple thing to itself, however much of a marvel it may be to other men. He discovered his own genius, as he supposed, — a thing impossible had the genius been real. Donne, who wrote more profound verses than any other English poet save one only, never wrote a profounder verse than

"Who knows his virtue's name and place, hath none."

Percival's life was by no means a remarkable one, except, perhaps, in the number of chances that seem to have been offered him to make something of himself, if anything were possibly to be made. He was never without friends, never without opportunities, if he could have availed himself of them. It is pleasant to see Mr. Ticknor treating him with that considerate kindness which many a young scholar can remember as shown so generously to himself. But nothing could help Percival, whose nature had defeat worked into its every fibre. He was not a real, but an imaginary man. His early attempt at suicide (as Mr. Ward seems to think it) is typical of him. He is not the first young man who, when crossed in love, has spoken of "loupin o'er a linn," nor will he be the last. But that any one who really meant to kill himself should put himself so resolutely in the way of being prevented, as Percival did, is hard to believe. Châteaubriand, the arch sentimentalist of these latter days, had the same harmless *velleity* of self-destruction, enough to scare his sister and so give him a smack of sensation, but a very different

thing from the settled will which would be really perilous. Shakespeare, always true to Nature, makes Hamlet dally with the same exciting fancy. Alas! self is the one thing the sentimentalist never truly wishes to destroy! One remarkable gift Percival seems to have had, which may be called memory of the eye. What he saw he never forgot, and this fitted him for a good geological observer. How great his power of combination was, which alone could have made him a great geologist, we cannot determine. But he seems to have shown but little in other directions. His faculty of acquiring foreign tongues I do not value so highly as Mr. Ward, having known many otherwise inferior men who possessed it. Indeed, the power to express the same nothing in ten different languages is something to be dreaded rather than admired. It gives a horrible advantage to dulness. The best thing to be learned from Percival's life is that he was happy for the first time when taken away from his vague pursuit of a vaguer ideal, and set to practical work.

LESSING[1]

1866

WHEN Burns's humor gave its last pathetic flicker in his "John, don't let the awkward squad fire over me," was he thinking of actual brother-volunteers, or of possible biographers? Did his words betray only the rhythmic sensitiveness of poetic nerves, or were they a foreboding of that helpless future, when the poet lies at the mercy of the plodder, of that bi-voluminous shape in which dulness overtakes and revenges itself on genius at last? Certainly Burns has suffered as much as most large-natured creatures from well-meaning efforts to account for him, to explain him away, to bring him into harmony with those well-regulated minds which, during a good part of the last century, found out a way, through rhyme, to snatch a prosiness beyond the reach of prose. Nay, he has been wronged also by that other want of true appreciation, which

[1] *G. E. Lessing. Sein Leben und seine Werke.* Von Adolf Stahr. Vermehrte und verbesserte Volks-Ausgabe. Dritte Auflage. Berlin. 1864.

The Same. Translated by E. P. Evans, Ph. D., Professor, &c., in the University of Michigan. Boston: W. V. Spencer. 1866. 2 vols.

G. E. Lessing's Sämmtliche Schriften, herausgegeben von Karl Lachmann. 1853–57. 12 Bände.

deals in panegyric, and would put asunder those two things which God has joined, the poet and the man, as if it were not the same rash improvidence that was the happiness of the verse and the misfortune of the gauger. But his death-bed was at least not haunted by the unappeasable apprehension of a German for his biographer; and that the fame of Lessing should have four times survived this cunningest assault of oblivion is proof enough that its base is broad and deep-set.

There seems to be, in the average German mind, an inability or a disinclination to see a thing as it really is, unless it be a matter of science. It finds its keenest pleasure in divining a profound significance in the most trifling things, and the number of mare's-nests that have been stared into by the German *Gelehrter* through his spectacles passes calculation. They are the one object of contemplation that makes that singular being perfectly happy, and they seem to be as common as those of the stork. In the dark forest of æsthetics, particularly, he finds them at every turn, — "fanno tutto il loco varo." If the greater part of our English criticism is apt only to skim the surface, the German, by way of being profound, too often burrows in delighted darkness quite beneath its subject, till the reader feels the ground hollow beneath him, and is fearful of caving into unknown depths of stagnant metaphysic air at every step. The Commentary on Shakespeare of Gervinus, a really superior man, reminds one of the Roman Campagna, penetrated underground in all directions by

strange winding caverns, the work of human borers in search of we know not what. Above are the divine poet's larks and daisies, his incommunicable skies, his broad prospects of life and nature; and meanwhile our Teutonic *teredo* worms his way below, and offers to be our guide into an obscurity of his own contriving. The reaction of language upon style, and even upon thought, by its limitations on the one hand, and its suggestions on the other, is so apparent to any one who has made even a slight study of comparative literature, that I have sometimes thought the German tongue at least an accessory before the fact, if nothing more, in the offences of German literature. The language has such a fatal genius for going stern-foremost, for yawing, and for not minding the helm without some ten minutes' notice in advance, that he must be a great sailor indeed who can safely make it the vehicle for anything but imperishable commodities. Vischer's *Æsthetik*, the best treatise on the subject, ancient or modern, is such a book as none but a German could write, and it is written as none but a German could have written it. The abstracts of its sections are sometimes nearly as long as the sections themselves, and it is as hard to make out which head belongs to which tail, as in a knot of snakes thawing themselves into sluggish individuality under a spring sun. The average German professor spends his life in making lanterns fit to guide us through the obscurest passages of all the *ologies* and *ysics*, and there are none in the world of such honest workmanship. They are durable,

they have intensifying glasses, reflectors of the most scientific make, capital sockets in which to set a light, and a handsome lump of potentially illuminating tallow is thrown in. But, in order to *see* by them, the explorer must make his own candle, supply his own cohesive wick of common-sense, and light it himself. And yet the admirable thoroughness of the German intellect! We should be ungrateful indeed if we did not acknowledge that it has supplied the raw material in almost every branch of science for the defter wits of other nations to work on; yet I have a suspicion that there are certain lighter departments of literature in which it may be misapplied, and turn into something very like clumsiness. Delightful as Jean Paul's humor is, how much more so would it be if he only knew when to stop! Ethereally deep as is his sentiment, should we not feel it more if he sometimes gave us a little less of it, — if he would only not always deal out his wine by beer-measure? *So* thorough is the German mind, that might it not seem now and then to work quite through its subject, and expatiate in cheerful unconsciousness on the other side thereof?

With all its merits of a higher and deeper kind, it yet seems to us that German literature has not quite satisfactorily answered that so long-standing question of the French abbé about *esprit*. Hard as it is for a German to be clear, still harder to be light, he is more than ever awkward in his attempts to produce that quality of style, so peculiarly French, which is neither wit nor liveliness taken

singly, but a mixture of the two that must be drunk while the effervescence lasts, and will not bear exportation into any other language. German criticism, excellent in other respects, and immeasurably superior to that of any other nation in its constructive faculty, in its instinct for getting at whatever principle of life lies at the heart of a work of genius, is seldom lucid, almost never entertaining. It may turn its light, if we have patience, into every obscurest cranny of its subject, one after another, but it never flashes light *out* of the subject itself, as Sainte-Beuve, for example, so often does, and with such unexpected charm. We should be inclined to put Julian Schmidt at the head of living critics in all the more essential elements of his outfit; but with him is not one conscious at too frequent intervals of the professorial grind, of that German tendency to bear on too heavily, where a French critic would touch and go with such exquisite measure? The Great Nation, as it cheerfully calls itself, is in nothing greater than in its talent for saying little things agreeably, which is perhaps the very top of mere culture, and in literature is the next best thing to the power of saying great things as easily as if they were little. German learning, like the elephants of Pyrrhus, is always in danger of turning upon what it was intended to adorn and reinforce, and trampling it ponderously to death. And yet what do we not owe it? Mastering all languages, all records of intellectual man, it has been able, or has enabled others, to strip away the husks of nationality and conven-

tionalism from the literatures of many races, and to disengage that kernel of human truth which is the germinating principle of them all. Nay, it has taught us to recognize also a certain value in those very husks, whether as shelter for the unripe or food for the fallen seed.

That the general want of style in German authors is not wholly the fault of the language is shown by Heine (a man of mixed blood), who can be daintily light in German; that it is not altogether a matter of race, is clear from the graceful airiness of Erasmus and Reuchlin in Latin, and of the Baron Grimm in French. The sense of heaviness which creeps over the reader from so many German books is mainly due, we suspect, to the language, which seems wellnigh incapable of that aerial perspective so delightful in first-rate French, and even English writing. But there must also be in the national character an insensibility to proportion, a want of that instinctive discretion which we call tact. Nothing short of this will account for the perpetual groping of German imaginative literature after some foreign mould in which to cast its thought or feeling, now trying a Louis Quatorze pattern, then something supposed to be Shakespearian, and at last going back to ancient Greece, or even Persia. Goethe himself, limpidly perfect as are many of his shorter poems, often fails in giving artistic coherence to his longer works. Leaving deeper qualities wholly out of the question, Wilhelm Meister seems a mere aggregation of episodes if compared with such a masterpiece as Paul

and Virginia, or even with a happy improvisation like the Vicar of Wakefield. The second part of Faust, too, is rather a reflection of Goethe's own changed view of life and man's relation to it, than a harmonious completion of the original conception. Full of placid wisdom and exquisite poetry it certainly is; but if we look at it as a poem, it seems more as if the author had striven to get in all he could, than to leave out all he might. We cannot help asking what business have paper money and political economy and geognosy here? We confess that Thales and the Homunculus weary us not a little, unless, indeed, a poem be nothing, after all, but a prolonged conundrum. Many of Schiller's lyrical poems, though the best of them find no match in modern verse for rapid energy, the very axles of language kindling with swiftness, seem disproportionately long in parts, and the thought too often has the life wellnigh squeezed out of it in the sevenfold coils of diction, dappled though it be with splendid imagery.

In German sentiment, which runs over so easily into sentimentalism, a foreigner cannot help being struck with a certain incongruousness. What can be odder, for example, than the mixture of sensibility and sausages in some of Goethe's earlier notes to Frau von Stein, unless, to be sure, the publishing them? It would appear that Germans were less sensitive to the ludicrous — and we are far from saying that this may not have its compensatory advantages — than either the English or the French. And what is the source of this sensibility,

if it be not an instinctive perception of the incongruous and disproportionate? Among all races, the English has ever shown itself most keenly alive to the fear of making itself ridiculous; and among all, none has produced so many humorists, only one of them, indeed, so profound as Cervantes, yet all masters in their several ways. What English-speaking man, except Boswell, could have arrived at Weimar, as Goethe did, in that absurd *Werthermontirung?* And where, out of Germany, could he have found a reigning Grand Duke to put his whole court into the same sentimental livery of blue and yellow, leather breeches, boots, and all, excepting only Herder, and that not on account of his clerical profession, but of his age? To be sure, it might be asked also where else in Europe was a prince to be met with capable of manly friendship with a man whose only decoration was his genius? But the comicality of the other fact no less remains. Certainly the German character is in no way so little remarkable as for its humor. If we were to trust the evidence of Herr Hub's dreary *Deutsche komische und humoristische Dichtung*, we should believe that no German had even so much as a suspicion of what humor meant, unless the book itself, as we are half inclined to suspect, be a joke in three volumes, the *want* of fun being the real point thereof. If German patriotism can be induced to find a grave delight in it, I congratulate Herr Hub's publishers, and for my own part advise any sober-minded man who may hereafter "be merry," not to "sing

psalms," but to read Hub as the more serious amusement of the two. There are epigrams there that make life more solemn, and, if taken in sufficient doses, would make it more precarious. Even Jean Paul, the greatest of German humorous authors, and never surpassed in comic conception or in the pathetic quality of humor, is not to be named with his master, Sterne, as a creative humorist. What are Siebenkäs, Fixlein, Schmelzle, and Fibel, (a single lay-figure to be draped at will with whimsical sentiment and reflection, and put in various attitudes,) compared with the living reality of Walter Shandy and his brother Toby, characters which we do not see merely as puppets in the author's mind, but poetically projected from it in an independent being of their own? Heine himself, the most graceful, sometimes the most touching, of modern poets, and clearly the most easy of German humorists, seems to me wanting in a refined perception of that inward propriety which is only another name for poetic proportion, and shocks us sometimes with an *Unfläthigkeit*, as at the end of his *Deutschland*, which, if it make Germans laugh, as we should be sorry to believe, makes other people hold their noses. Such things have not been possible in English since Swift, and the *persifleur* Heine cannot offer the same excuse of savage cynicism that might be pleaded for the Irishman.

I have hinted that Herr Stahr's Life of Lessing is not precisely the kind of biography that would have been most pleasing to the man who could not

conceive that an author should be satisfied with anything more than truth in praise, or anything less in criticism. My respect for what Lessing was, and for what he did, is profound. In the history of literature it would be hard to find a man so stalwart, so kindly, so sincere,[1] so capable of great ideas, whether in their influence on the intellect or the life, so unswervingly true to the truth, so free from the common weaknesses of his class. Since Luther, Germany has given birth to no such intellectual athlete, no son so German to the core. Greater poets she has had, but no greater writer; no nature more finely tempered. Nay, may we not say that great character is as rare a thing as great genius, if it be not even a nobler form of it? For surely it is easier to embody fine thinking, or delicate sentiment, or lofty aspiration, in a book than in a life. The written leaf, if it be, as some few are, a safe-keeper and conductor of celestial fire, is secure. Poverty cannot pinch, passion swerve, or trial shake it. But the man Lessing, harassed and striving life-long, always poor and always hopeful, with no patron but his own right-hand, the very shuttlecock of fortune, who saw ruin's ploughshare drive through the hearth on which his first home-fire was hardly kindled, and who, through all, was faithful to himself, to his friend, to his duty, and to his ideal, is something more inspiring for us than the most glorious utter-

[1] "If I write at all, it is not possible for me to write otherwise than just as I think and feel." — Lessing to his father, 21st December, 1767.

ance of merely intellectual power. The figure of Goethe is grand, it is rightfully preëminent, it has something of the calm, and something of the coldness, of the immortals; but the Valhalla of German letters can show one form, in its simple manhood, statelier even than his.

Manliness and simplicity, if they are not necessary coefficients in producing character of the purest tone, were certainly leading elements in the Lessing who is still so noteworthy and lovable to us when eighty-six years have passed since his bodily presence vanished from among men. He loved clearness, he hated exaggeration in all its forms. He was the first German who had any conception of style, and who could be full without spilling over on all sides. Herr Stahr, I think, is not just the biographer he would have chosen for himself. His book is rather a panegyric than a biography. There is sometimes an almost comic disproportion between the matter and the manner, especially in the epic details of Lessing's onslaughts on the nameless herd of German authors. It is as if Sophocles should have given a strophe to every bullock slain by Ajax in his mad foray upon the Grecian commissary stores. He is too fond of striking an attitude, and his tone rises unpleasantly near a scream, as he calls the personal attention of heaven and earth to something which Lessing himself would have thought a very matter-of-course affair. He who lays it down as an axiom, that "genius loves simplicity," would hardly have been pleased to hear the "Letters on Literature" called

the "burning thunderbolts of his annihilating criticism," or the Anti-Götze pamphlets, "the hurtling arrows that sped from the bow of the immortal hero." Nor would he with whom accuracy was a matter of conscience have heard patiently that the Letters "appeared in a period distinguished for its lofty tone of mind, and in their own towering boldness they are a true picture of the intrepid character of the age."[1] If the age was what Herr Stahr represents it to have been, where is the great merit of Lessing? He would have smiled, we suspect, a little contemptuously, at Herr Stahr's repeatedly quoting a certificate from the "historian of the proud Britons," that he was "the first critic in Europe." Whether we admit or not Lord Macaulay's competence in the matter, we are sure that Lessing would not have thanked his biographer for this soup-ticket to a ladleful of fame. If ever a man stood firmly on his own feet, and asked help of none, that man was Gotthold Ephraim Lessing.

Herr Stahr's desire to *make* a hero of his subject and his love for sonorous sentences like those we have quoted above are apt to stand somewhat in the way of our chance at taking a fair measure of the man, and seeing in what his heroism really lay. He furnishes little material for a comparative estimate of Lessing, or for judging of the

[1] "I am sure that Kleist would rather have taken another wound with him into his grave than have such stuff jabbered over him (*sich solch Zeug nachschwatzen lassen*)." Lessing to Gleim, 6th September, 1759.

foreign influences which helped from time to time in making him what he was. Nothing is harder than to worry out a date from Herr Stahr's haystacks of praise and quotation. Yet dates are of special value in tracing the progress of an intellect like Lessing's, which, little actuated by an inward creative energy, was commonly stirred to motion by the impulse of other minds, and struck out its brightest flashes by collision with them. He himself tells us that a critic should "first seek out some one with whom he can contend," and quotes in justification from one of Aristotle's commentators, *Solet Aristoteles quærere pugnam in suis libris.* This Lessing was always wont to do. He could only feel his own strength, and make others feel it, could only call it into full play in an intellectual wrestling-bout. He was always anointed and ready for the ring, but with this distinction, that he was no mere prize-fighter, or bully for the side that would pay him best, nor even a contender for mere sentiment, but a self-forgetful champion for the truth as he saw it. Nor is this true of him only as a critic. His more purely imaginative works, his Minna, his Emilia, his Nathan, were all written, not to satisfy the craving of a poetic instinct, nor to rid head and heart of troublous guests by building them a lodging outside himself, as Goethe used to do, but to prove some thesis of criticism or morals by which Truth could be served. His zeal for her was perfectly unselfish. "Does one write, then, for the sake of being always in the right? I think I have been as serviceable

to Truth," he says, "when I miss her, and my failure is the occasion of another's discovering her, as if I had discovered her myself."[1] One would almost be inclined to think, from Herr Stahr's account of the matter, that Lessing had been an autochthonous birth of the German soil, without intellectual ancestry or helpful kindred. That this is the sufficient natural history of no original mind need hardly be said, since originality consists quite as much in the power of using to purpose what it finds ready to its hand, as in that of producing what is absolutely new. Perhaps we might say that it was nothing more than the faculty of combining the separate, and therefore ineffectual, conceptions of others, and making them into living thought by the breath of its own organizing spirit. A great man without a past, if he be not an impossibility, will certainly have no future. He would be like those conjectural Miltons and Cromwells of Gray's imaginary hamlet. The only privilege of the original man is, that, like other sovereign princes, he has the right to call in the current coin and reissue it stamped with his own image, as was the practice of Lessing.

Herr Stahr's over-intensity of phrase is less offensive than amusing when applied to Lessing's early efforts in criticism. Speaking of poor old Gottsched, he says: "Lessing assailed him sometimes with cutting criticism, and again with exquisite humor. In the notice of Gottsched's poems, he says, among other things, 'The exterior of the

[1] Letter to Klotz, 9th June, 1766.

volume is so handsome that it will do great credit to the bookstores, and it is to be hoped that it will continue to do so for a long time. But to give a satisfactory idea of the interior surpasses our powers.' And in conclusion he adds, 'These poems cost two thalers and four groschen. The two thalers pay for the ridiculous, and the four groschen pretty much for the useful.'" Again, he tells us that Lessing concludes his notice of Klopstock's Ode to God "with these inimitably roguish words: 'What presumption to beg thus earnestly for a woman!' Does not a whole book of criticism lie in these nine words?" For a young man of twenty-two, Lessing's criticisms show a great deal of independence and maturity of thought; but humor he never had, and his wit was always of the bluntest, crushing rather than cutting. The mace, and not the scimitar, was his weapon. Let Herr Stahr put all Lessing's "inimitably roguish words" together, and compare them with these few untranslatable lines from Voltaire's letter to Rousseau, thanking him for his *Discours sur l'Inégalité:* "On n'a jamais employé tant d'esprit à vouloir nous rendre bêtes; il prend envie de marcher à quatre pattes quand on lit votre ouvrage." Lessing from the first was something far better than a wit. Force was always much more characteristic of him than cleverness. Sometimes Herr Stahr's hero-worship leads him into positive misstatement. For example, speaking of Lessing's Preface to the "Contributions to the History and Reform of the Theatre," he tells us that "his eye was directed

chiefly to the English theatre and Shakespeare." Lessing at that time (1749) was only twenty, and knew little more than the names of any foreign dramatists except the French. In this very Preface his English list skips from Shakespeare to Dryden, and in the Spanish he omits Calderon, Tirso de Molina, and Alarcon. Accordingly, we suspect that the date is wrongly assigned to Lessing's translation of *La Vida es Sueño*. His mind was hardly yet ready to feel the strange charm of this most imaginative of Calderon's dramas.

Even where Herr Stahr undertakes to give us light on the *sources* of Lessing, it is something of the dimmest. He attributes "Miss Sara Sampson" to the influence of the "Merchant of London," as Mr. Evans translates it literally from the German, meaning our old friend, "George Barnwell." But I am strongly inclined to suspect from internal evidence that Moore's more recent "Gamester" gave the prevailing impulse. And if Herr Stahr must needs tell us anything of the Tragedy of Middle-Class Life, he ought to have known that on the English stage it preceded Lillo by more than a century, — witness the "Yorkshire Tragedy," — and that something very like it was even much older in France. One may fairly complain, also, that he does not bring out more clearly how much Lessing owed to Diderot both as dramatist and critic, nor give us so much as a hint of what already existing English criticism did for him in the way of suggestion and guidance. But though I feel it to be my duty to say so much of Herr

Stahr's positive faults and negative shortcomings, yet we leave him in very good humor. While he is altogether too full upon certain points of merely transitory importance, — such as the quarrel with Klotz, — yet we are bound to thank him both for the abundance of his extracts from Lessing, and for the judgment he has shown in the choice of them. Any one not familiar with his writings will be able to get a very good notion of the quality of his mind, and the amount of his literary performance, from these volumes; and that, after all, is the chief matter. As to the absolute merit of his works other than critical, Herr Stahr's judgment is too much at the mercy of his partiality to be of great value.

Of Mr. Evans's translation I can speak for the most part with high commendation. There are great difficulties in translating German prose; and whatever other good things Herr Stahr may have learned from Lessing, terseness and clearness are not among them. I have seldom seen a translation which read more easily, or was generally more faithful. That Mr. Evans should nod now and then I do not wonder, nor that he should sometimes choose the wrong word. I have only compared him with the original where I saw reason for suspecting a slip; but, though I have not found much to complain of, I have found enough to satisfy me that his book will gain by a careful revision. I select a few oversights, mainly from the first volume, as examples. On page 34, comparing Lessing with Goethe on arriving at the

University, Mr. Evans, I think, obscures, if he does not wholly lose the meaning, when he translates *Leben* by "social relations," and is altogether wrong in rendering *Patrizier* by "aristocrat." At the top of the next page, too, "suspicious" is not the word for *bedenklich.* Had he been writing English, he would surely have said "questionable." On page 47, "overtrodden shoes" is hardly so good as the idiomatic "down at the heel." On page 104, "A very humorous representation" is oddly made to "confirm the documentary evidence." The reverse is meant. On page 115, the sentence beginning "the tendency in both" needs revising. On page 138, Mr. Evans speaks of the "Poetical Village-younker of Destouches." This, I think, is hardly the English of *Le Poète Campagnard,* and almost recalls Lieberkühn's theory of translation, toward which Lessing was so unrelenting, — "When I do not understand a passage, why, I translate it word for word." On page 149, "Miss Sara Sampson" is called "the first social tragedy of the German Drama." All tragedies surely are *social,* except the "Prometheus." *Bürgerliche Tragödie* means a tragedy in which the protagonist is taken from common life, and perhaps cannot be translated clearly into English except by "tragedy of middle-class life." So on page 170 we find Emilia Galotti called a "Virginia *bourgeoise,*" and on page 172 a hospital becomes a *lazaretto.* On page 190 we have a sentence ending in this strange fashion: "in an episode of the English original, which Wieland omitted entirely, one of its charac-

ters nevertheless appeared in the German tragedy." On page 205 we have the Seven Years' War called "a bloody *process*." This is mere carelessness, for Mr. Evans, in the second volume, translates it rightly "*lawsuit*." What English reader would know what "You are intriguing me" means, on page 228? On page 264, vol. ii., I find a passage inaccurately rendered, which I consider of more consequence, because it is a quotation from Lessing. "O, out upon the man who claims, Almighty God, to be a preacher of Thy word, and yet so impudently asserts that, in order to attain Thy purposes, there was only one way in which it pleased *Thee* to make *Thyself* known to him!" This is very far from *nur den einzigen Weg gehabt den Du Dir gefallen lassen ihm kund zu machen!* The *ihm* is scornfully emphatic. I hope Professor Evans will go over his version for a second edition much more carefully than I have had any occasion to do. He has done an excellent service to our literature, for which we may heartily thank him, in choosing a book of this kind to translate, and translating it so well. I would not look such a gift horse too narrowly in the mouth.

Let me now endeavor to sum up the result of Lessing's life and labor with what success I may.

Gotthold Ephraim Lessing was born (January 22, 1729) at Camenz, in Upper Lusatia, the second child and eldest son of John Gottfried Lessing, a Lutheran clergyman. Those who believe in the persistent qualities of race, or the cumulative property of culture, will find something to their purpose

in his Saxon blood and his clerical and juristic ancestry. It is worth mentioning, that his grandfather, in the thesis for his doctor's degree, defended the right to entire freedom of religious belief. The name first comes to the surface in Parson Clement Lessigk, nearly three centuries ago, and survives to the present day in a painter of some distinction. It has almost passed into a proverb, that the mothers of remarkable children have been something beyond the common. If there be any truth in the theory, the case of Lessing was an exception, as might have been inferred, perhaps, from the peculiarly masculine type of his character and intellect. His mother was in no wise superior, but his father seems to have been a man somewhat above the pedantic average of the provincial clergymen of his day, and to have been a scholar in the ampler meaning of the word. Besides the classics, he had possessed himself of French and English, and was somewhat versed in the Oriental languages. The temper of his theology may be guessed from his having been, as his son tells us with some pride, one of "the earliest translators of Tillotson." We can only conjecture him from the letters which Lessing wrote to him, from which I should fancy him as on the whole a decided and even choleric old gentleman, in whom the wig, though not a predominant, was yet a notable feature, and who was, like many other fathers, permanently astonished at the fruit of his loins. He would have preferred one of the so-called learned professions for his son, — theology above all, — and would seem to have

never quite reconciled himself to his son's distinction, as being in none of the three careers which alone were legitimate. Lessing's bearing towards him, always independent, is really beautiful in its union of respectful tenderness with unswerving self-assertion. When he wished to evade the maternal eye, Gotthold used in his letters to set up a screen of Latin between himself and her; and we conjecture the worthy Pastor Primarius playing over again in his study at Camenz, with some scruples of conscience, the old trick of Chaucer's cock:—

> "Mulier est hominis confusio;
> Madam, the sentence of this Latin is,
> Woman is mannës joy and mannës bliss."

He appears to have snatched a fearful and but ill-concealed joy from the sight of the first collected edition of his son's works, unlike Tillotson as they certainly were. Ah, had they only been *Opera!* Yet were they not volumes, after all, and able to stand on their own edges beside the immortals, if nothing more?

After grinding with private-tutor Mylius the requisite time, Lessing entered the school of Camenz, and in his thirteenth year was sent to the higher institution at Meissen. We learn little of his career there, except that Theophrastus, Plautus, and Terence were already his favorite authors, that he once characteristically distinguished himself by a courageous truthfulness, and that he wrote a Latin poem on the valor of the Saxon soldiers, which his father very sensibly advised him to shorten. In 1750, four years after leaving the school, he writes

to his father: "I believed even when I was at Meissen that one must learn much there which he cannot make the least use of in real life (*der Welt*), and I now [after trying Leipzig and Wittenberg] see it all the more clearly," — a melancholy observation which many other young men have made under similar circumstances. Sent to Leipzig in his seventeenth year, he finds himself an awkward, ungainly lad, and sets diligently to perfecting himself in the somewhat unscholastic accomplishments of riding, dancing, and fencing. He also sedulously frequents the theatre, and wrote a play, "The Young Scholar," which attained the honor of representation. Meanwhile his most intimate companion was a younger brother of his old tutor Mylius, a young man of more than questionable morals, and who had even written a satire on the elders of Camenz, for which — over-confidently trusting himself in the outraged city — he had been fined and imprisoned; so little could the German Muse, celebrated by Klopstock for her swiftness of foot, protect her son. With this scandalous person and with play-actors, more than probably of both sexes, did the young Lessing share a Christmas cake sent him by his mother. Such news was not long in reaching Camenz, and we can easily fancy how tragic it seemed in the little parsonage there, to what cabinet councils it gave rise in the paternal study, to what ominous shaking of the clerical wig in that domestic Olympus. A pious fraud is practised on the boy, who hurries home thinly clad through the winter weather, his ill-eaten Christmas

cake wringing him with remorseful indigestion, to receive the last blessing, if such a prodigal might hope for it, of a broken-hearted mother. He finds the good dame in excellent health, and softened toward him by a cold he has taken on his pious journey. He remains at home several months, now writing Anacreontics of such warmth that his sister (as volunteer representative of the common hangman) burns them in the family stove; now composing sermons to convince his mother that "he could be a preacher any day," — a theory of that sacred office unhappily not yet extinct. At Easter, 1747, he gets back to Leipzig again, with some scant supply of money in his pocket, but is obliged to make his escape thence between two days somewhere toward the middle of the next year, leaving behind him some histrionic debts (chiefly, we fear, of a certain Mademoiselle Lorenz) for which he had confidingly made himself security. Stranded, by want of floating or other capital, at Wittenberg, he enters himself, with help from home, as a student there, but soon migrates again to Berlin, which had been his goal when making his hegira from Leipzig. In Berlin he remained three years, applying himself to his chosen calling of author at all work, by doing whatever honest job offered itself, — verse, criticism, or translation, — and profitably studious in a very wide range of languages and their literature. Above all, he learned the great secret, which his stalwart English contemporary, Johnson, also acquired, of being able to "dine heartily" for threepence.

Meanwhile he continues in a kind of colonial dependence on the parsonage at Camenz, the bonds gradually slackening, sometimes shaken a little rudely, and always giving alarming hints of approaching and inevitable autonomy. From the few home letters of Lessing which remain, (covering the period before 1753, there are only eight in all,) we are able to surmise that a pretty constant maternal cluck and shrill paternal warning were kept up from the home coop. We find Lessing defending the morality of the stage and his own private morals against charges and suspicions of his parents, and even making the awful confession that he does not consider the Christian religion itself as a thing "to be taken on trust," nor a Christian by mere tradition so valuable a member of society as "one who has *prudently* doubted, and by the way of examination has arrived at conviction, or at least striven to arrive." Boyish scepticism of the superficial sort is a common phenomenon enough, but the Lessing variety of it seems to me sufficiently rare in a youth of twenty. What strikes me mainly in the letters of these years is not merely the maturity they show, though that is remarkable, but the tone. We see already in them the cheerful and never overweening self-confidence which always so pleasantly distinguished Lessing, and that strength of tackle, so seldom found in literary men, which brings the mind well home to its anchor, enabling it to find holding-ground and secure riding in any sea. "What care I to live in plenty,"

he asks gayly, "if I only live?" Indeed, Lessing learned early, and never forgot, that whoever would be life's master, and not its drudge, must make it a means, and never allow it to become an end. He could say more truly than Goethe, *Mein Acker ist die Zeit*, since he not only sowed in it the seed of thought for other men and other times, but cropped it for his daily bread. Above all, we find Lessing even thus early endowed with the power of keeping his eyes wide open to what he was after, to what would help or hinder him, — a much more singular gift than is commonly supposed. Among other jobs of this first Berlin period, he had undertaken to arrange the library of a certain Herr Rüdiger, getting therefor his meals and "other receipts," whatever they may have been. His father seems to have heard with anxiety that this arrangement had ceased, and Lessing writes to him: "I never wished to have anything to do with this old man longer than *until I had made myself thoroughly acquainted with his great library*. This is now accomplished, and we have accordingly parted." This was in his twenty-first year, and I have no doubt, from the *range* of scholarship which Lessing had at command so young, that it was perfectly true. All through his life he was thoroughly German in this respect also, that he never *quite* smelted his knowledge clear from some slag of learning.

In the early part of the first Berlin residence, Pastor Primarius Lessing, hearing that his son meditated a movement on Vienna, was much ex-

ercised with fears of the temptation to Popery he would be exposed to in that capital. I suspect that the attraction thitherward had its source in a perhaps equally catholic, but less theological magnet, — the Mademoiselle Lorenz above mentioned. Let us remember the perfectly innocent passion of Mozart for an actress, and be comforted. There is not the slightest evidence that Lessing's life at this time, or any other, though careless, was in any way debauched. No scandal was ever coupled with his name, nor is any biographic chemistry needed to bleach spots out of his reputation. What cannot be said of Wieland, of Goethe, of Schiller, of Jean Paul, may be safely affirmed of this busy and single-minded man. The parental fear of Popery brought him a seasonable supply of money from home, which enabled him to clothe himself decently enough to push his literary fortunes, and put on a bold front with publishers. Poor enough he often was, but never in so shabby a pass that he was forced to write behind a screen, like Johnson.

It was during this first stay in Berlin that Lessing was brought into personal relations with Voltaire. Through an acquaintance with the great man's secretary, Richier, he was employed as translator in the scandalous Hirschel lawsuit, so dramatically set forth by Carlyle in his Life of Frederick, though Lessing's share in it seems to have been unknown to him. The service could hardly have been other than distasteful to him; but it must have been with some thrill of the *anche io!* kind

that the poor youth, just fleshing his maiden pen in criticism, stood face to face with the famous author, with whose name all Europe rang from side to side. This was in February, 1751. Young as he was, we fancy those cool eyes of his making some strange discoveries as to the real nature of that lean nightmare of Jesuits and dunces. Afterwards the same secretary lent him the manuscript of the *Siècle de Louis XIV.*, and Lessing thoughtlessly taking it into the country with him, it was not forthcoming when called for by the author. Voltaire naturally enough danced with rage, screamed all manner of unpleasant things about robbery and the like, cashiered the secretary, and was, I see no reason to doubt, really afraid of a pirated edition. *This* time his cry of wolf must have had a quaver of sincerity in it. Herr Stahr, who can never keep separate the Lessing as he then was and the Lessing as he afterwards became, takes fire at what he chooses to consider an unworthy suspicion of the Frenchman, and treats himself to some rather cheap indignation on the subject. For myself, I think Voltaire altogether in the right, and I respect Lessing's honesty too much to suppose, with his biographer, that it was this which led him, years afterwards, to do such severe justice to *Merope*, and other tragedies of the same author. The affair happened in December, 1751, and a year later Lessing calls Voltaire a "great man," and says of his *Amalie* that "it has not only beautiful passages, it is beautiful throughout, and the tears

of a reader of feeling will justify our judgment." Surely there is no resentment here. The only ground for wonder would be its being written after the Hirschel business. At any rate, we cannot allow Herr Stahr to shake our faith in the sincerity of Lessing's motives in criticism, — he could not in the soundness of the criticism itself, — by tracing it up to a spring at once so petty and so personal.

During a part of 1752,[1] Lessing was at Wittenberg again as student of medicine, the parental notion of a strictly professional career of some kind not having yet been abandoned. We must give his father the credit of having done his best, in a well-meaning paternal fashion, to make his son over again in his own image, and to thwart the design of nature by coaxing or driving him into the pinfold of a prosperous obscurity. But Gotthold, with all his gifts, had no talent whatever for contented routine. His was a mind always in solution, which the divine order of things, as it is called, could not precipitate into any of the traditional forms of crystallization, and in which the time to come was already fermenting. The principle of growth was in the young literary hack, and

[1] Herr Stahr heads the fifth chapter of his Second Book, "Lessing at Wittenberg. December, 1751, to November, 1752." But we never feel quite sure of his dates. The Richier affair puts Lessing in Berlin in December, 1751, and he took his Master's degree at Wittenberg, 29th April, 1752. We are told that he finally left Wittenberg "toward the end" of that year. He himself, writing from Berlin in 1754, says that he has been absent from that city *nur ein halbes Jahr* since 1748. There is only one letter for 1752, dated at Wittenberg, 9th June.

he must obey it or die. His was to the last a *natura naturans*, never a *naturata*. Lessing seems to have done what he could to be a dutiful failure. But there was something in him stronger and more sacred than even filial piety; and the good old pastor is remembered now only as the father of a son who would have shared the benign oblivion of his own theological works, if he could only have had his wise way with him. Even after never so many biographies and review articles, genius continues to be a marvellous and inspiring thing. At the same time, considering the then condition of what was pleasantly called literature in Germany, there was not a little to be said on the paternal side of the question, though it may not seem now a very heavy mulct to give up one son out of ten to immortality, — at least the Fates seldom decimate in *this* way. Lessing had now, if we accept the common standard in such matters, "completed his education," and the result may be summed up in his own words to Michaelis, 16th October, 1754: "I have studied at the Fürstenschule at Meissen, and after that at Leipzig and Wittenberg. But I should be greatly embarrassed if I were asked to tell *what*." As early as his twentieth year he had arrived at some singular notions as to the uses of learning. On the 20th of January, 1749, he writes to his mother: "I found out that books, indeed, would make me learned, *but never make me a man*." Like most men of great knowledge, as distinguished from mere scholars, he seems to have been always a rather indiscriminate reader, and to have been

fond, as Johnson was, of "browsing" in libraries. Johnson neither in amplitude of literature nor exactness of scholarship could be deemed a match for Lessing; but they were alike in the power of readily applying whatever they had learned, whether for purposes of illustration or argument. They resemble each other, also, in a kind of absolute common-sense, and in the force with which they could plant a direct blow with the whole weight both of their training and their temperament behind it. As a critic, Johnson ends where Lessing begins. The one is happy in the lower region of the understanding: the other can breathe freely in the ampler air of reason alone. Johnson acquired learning, and stopped short through indolence at a certain point. Lessing assimilated it, and accordingly his education ceased only with his life. Both had something of the intellectual sluggishness that is apt to go with great strength; and both had to be baited by the antagonism of circumstances or opinions, not only into the exhibition, but into the possession of their entire force. Both may be more properly called original men than, in the highest sense, original writers.

From 1752 to 1760, with an interval of something over two years spent in Leipzig to be near a good theatre, Lessing was settled in Berlin, and gave himself wholly and earnestly to the life of a man of letters. A thoroughly healthy, cheerful nature he most surely had, with something at first of the careless light-heartedness of youth. Healthy he was not always to be, not always cheerful, often

very far from light-hearted, but manly from first to last he eminently was. Downcast he could never be, for his strongest instinct, invaluable to him also as a critic, was to see things as they really are. And this not in the sense of a cynic, but of one who measures himself as well as his circumstances, — who loves truth as the most beautiful of all things and the only permanent possession, as being of one substance with the soul. In a man like Lessing, whose character is even more interesting than his works, the tone and turn of thought are what we like to get glimpses of. And for this his letters are more helpful than those of most authors, as might be expected of one who said of himself, that, in his more serious work, "he must profit by his first heat to accomplish anything." He began, I say, light-heartedly. He did not believe that "one should thank God only for good things." "He who is only in good health, and is willing to work, has nothing to fear in the world." "What another man would call want, I call comfort." "Must not one often act thoughtlessly, if one would provoke Fortune to do something for him?" In his first inexperience, the life of "the sparrow on the house-top" (which we find oddly translated "roof") was the one he would choose for himself. Later in life, when he wished to marry, he was of another mind, and perhaps discovered that there was something in the old father's notion of a fixed position. "The life of the sparrow on the house-top is only right good if one need not expect any end to it. If it cannot always

last, every day it lasts too long," — he writes to Ebert in 1770. Yet even then he takes the manly view. "Everything in the world has its time, everything may be overlived and overlooked, if one only have health." Nor let any one suppose that Lessing, full of courage as he was, found professional authorship a garden of Alcinoüs. From creative literature he continually sought refuge, and even repose, in the driest drudgery of mere scholarship. On the 26th of April, 1768, he writes to his brother with something of his old gayety: "Thank God, the time will soon come when I cannot call a penny in the world my own but I must first earn it. I am unhappy if it must be by writing." And again in May, 1771: "Among all the wretched, I think him the most wretched who must work with his head, even if he is not conscious of having one. But what is the good of complaining?" Lessing's life, if it is a noble example, so far as it concerned himself alone, is also a warning when another is to be asked to share it. He too would have profited had he earlier learned and more constantly borne in mind the profound wisdom of that old saying, *Si sit prudentia.* Let the young poet, however he may believe of his art that "all other pleasures are not worth its pains," consider well what it is to call down fire from heaven to keep the pot boiling, before he commit himself to a life of authorship as something fine and easy. That fire will not condescend to such office, though it come without asking on ceremonial days to the free service of the altar.

Lessing, however, never would, even if he could, have so desecrated his better powers. For a bare livelihood, he always went sturdily to the market of hack-work, where his learning would fetch him a price. But it was only in extremest need that he would claim that benefit of clergy. "I am worried," he writes to his brother Karl, 8th April, 1773, "and work because working is the only means to cease being so. But you and Voss are very much mistaken if you think that it could ever be indifferent to me, under such circumstances, on what I work. Nothing less true, whether as respects the work itself or the principal object wherefor I work. I have been in my life before now in very wretched circumstances, yet never in such that I would have written for bread in the true meaning of the word. I have begun my 'Contributions' because this work helps me . . . to live from one day to another." It is plain that he does not call this kind of thing in any high sense writing. Of that he had far other notions; for though he honestly disclaimed the title, yet his dream was always to be a poet. But he *was* willing to work, as he claimed to be, because he had one ideal higher than that of being a poet, namely, to be thoroughly a man. To Nicolai he writes in 1758: "All ways of earning his bread are alike becoming to an honest man, whether to split wood or to sit at the helm of state. It does not concern his conscience how useful he is, but how useful he would be." Goethe's poetic sense was the Minotaur to which he sacrificed everything. To make a study, he would soil the maiden petals

of a woman's soul; to get the delicious sensation of a reflex sorrow, he would wring a heart. All that saves his egoism from being hateful is, that, with its immense reaches, it cheats the sense into a feeling of something like sublimity. A patch of sand is unpleasing; a desert has all the awe of ocean. Lessing also felt the duty of self-culture; but it was not so much for the sake of feeding fat this or that faculty as of strengthening character, the only soil in which real mental power can root itself and find sustenance. His advice to his brother Karl, who was beginning to write for the stage, is two parts moral to one literary. "Study ethics diligently, learn to express yourself well and correctly, and cultivate your own character. Without that I cannot conceive a good dramatic author." Marvellous counsel this will seem to those who think that wisdom is only to be found in the fool's paradise of Bohemia!

I said that Lessing's dream was to be a poet. In comparison with success as a dramatist, he looked on all other achievement as inferior in kind. In 1767 he writes to Gleim (speaking of his call to Hamburg): "Such circumstances were needed to rekindle in me an almost extinguished love for the theatre. I was just beginning to lose myself in other studies which would have made me unfit for any work of genius. My *Laocoön* is now a secondary labor." And yet he never fell into the mistake of overvaluing what he valued so highly. His unflinching common-sense would have saved him from that, as it afterwards enabled him to see

that something was wanting in him which must enter into the making of true poetry, whose distinction from prose is an inward one of nature, and not an outward one of form. While yet under thirty, he assures Mendelssohn that he was quite right in neglecting poetry for philosophy, because "only a part of our youth should be given up to the arts of the beautiful. We must practise ourselves in weightier things before we die. An old man, who lifelong has done nothing but rhyme, and an old man who lifelong has done nothing but pass his breath through a stick with holes in it, — I doubt much whether such an old man has arrived at what he was meant for."

This period of Lessing's life was a productive one, though none of its printed results can be counted of permanent value, except his share in the "Letters on German Literature." And even these must be reckoned as belonging to the years of his apprenticeship and training for the masterworkman he afterwards became. The small fry of authors and translators were hardly fitted to call out his full strength, but his vivisection of them taught him the value of certain structural principles. "To one dissection of the fore quarter of an ass," says Haydon in his diary, "I owe my information." Yet even in his earliest criticisms we are struck with the same penetration and steadiness of judgment, the same firm grasp of the essential and permanent, that were afterwards to make his opinions law in the courts of taste. For example, he says of Thomson, that, "as a dramatic poet,

he had the fault of never knowing when to leave off; he lets every character talk so long as anything can be said; accordingly, during these prolonged conversations, the action stands still, and the story becomes tedious." Of "Roderick Random," he says that "its author is neither a Richardson nor a Fielding; he is one of those writers of whom there are plenty among the Germans and French." I cite these merely because their firmness of tone seems to us uncommon in a youth of twenty-four. In the "Letters," the range is much wider, and the application of principles more consequent. He had already secured for himself a position among the literary men of that day, and was beginning to be feared for the inexorable justice of his criticisms. His "Fables" and his "Miss Sara Sampson" had been translated into French, and had attracted the attention of Grimm, who says of them (December, 1754): "These Fables commonly contain in a few lines a new and profound moral meaning. M. Lessing has much wit, genius, and invention; the dissertations which follow the Fables prove moreover that he is an excellent critic." In Berlin, Lessing made friendships, especially with Mendelssohn, Von Kleist, Nicolai, Gleim, and Ramler. For Mendelssohn and Von Kleist he seems to have felt a real love; for the others at most a liking, as the best material that could be had. It certainly was not of the juiciest. He seems to have worked hard and played hard, equally at home in his study and Baumann's wine-cellar. He was busy, poor, and happy.

But he was restless. I suspect that the necessity of forever picking up crumbs, and their occasional scarcity, made the life of the sparrow on the house-top less agreeable than he had expected. The imagined freedom was not quite so free after all, for necessity is as short a tether as dependence, or official duty, or what not, and the regular occupation of grub-hunting is as tame and wearisome as another. Moreover, Lessing had probably by this time sucked his friends dry of any intellectual stimulus they could yield him; and when friendship reaches that pass, it is apt to be anything but inspiring. Except Mendelssohn and Von Kleist, they were not men capable of rating him at his true value; and Lessing was one of those who always burn up the fuel of life at a fearful rate. Admirably dry as the supplies of Ramler and the rest no doubt were, they had not substance enough to keep his mind at the high temperature it needed, and he would soon be driven to the cutting of green stuff from his own wood-lot, more rich in smoke than fire. Besides this, he could hardly have been at ease among intimates most of whom could not even conceive of that intellectual honesty, that total disregard of all personal interests where truth was concerned, which was an innate quality of Lessing's mind. Their theory of criticism was, Truth, or even worse if possible, for all who do not belong to our set; for us, that delicious falsehood which is no doubt a slow poison, but then so *very* slow. Their nerves were unbraced by that fierce democracy of thought, trampling

on all prescription, all tradition, in which Lessing loved to shoulder his way and advance his insupportable foot. "What is called a heretic," he says in his Preface to *Berengarius*, "has a very good side. It is a man who at least *wishes* to see with his own eyes." And again, "I know not if it be a duty to offer up fortune and life to the truth; . . . but I know it *is* a duty, if one undertake to teach the truth, to teach the whole of it, or none at all." Such men as Gleim and Ramler were mere *dilettanti*, and could have no notion how sacred his convictions are to a militant thinker like Lessing. His creed as to the rights of friendship in criticism might be put in the words of Selden, the firm tread of whose mind was like his own: "Opinion and affection extremely differ. Opinion is something wherein I go about to give reason why all the world should think as I think. Affection is a thing wherein I look after the pleasing of myself." How little his friends were capable of appreciating this view of the matter is plain from a letter of Ramler to Gleim, cited by Herr Stahr. Lessing had shown up the weaknesses of a certain work by the Abbé Batteux (long ago gathered to his literary fathers as conclusively as poor old Ramler himself), without regard to the important fact that the Abbé's book had been translated by a friend. Horrible to think of at best, thrice horrible when the friend's name was Ramler! The impression thereby made on the friendly heart may be conceived. A ray of light penetrated the rather opaque substance of Herr Ramler's mind,

and revealed to him the dangerous character of Lessing. "I know well," he says, "that Herr Lessing means to speak his own opinion, and" — what is the dreadful inference? — "and, by suppressing others, to gain air, and make room for himself. This disposition is not to be overcome."[1] Fortunately not, for Lessing's opinion always meant something, and was worth having. Gleim no doubt sympathized deeply with the sufferer by this treason, for he too had been shocked at some disrespect for La Fontaine, as a disciple of whom he had announced himself.

Berlin was hardly the place for Lessing, if he could not take a step in any direction without risk of treading on somebody's gouty foot. This was not the last time that he was to have experience of the fact that the critic's pen, the more it has of truth's celestial temper, the more it is apt to reverse the miracle of the archangel's spear, and to bring out whatever is toadlike in the nature of him it touches. We can well understand the sadness with which he said,

"Der Blick des Forscher's fand
Nicht selten mehr als er zu finden wünschte."

Here, better than anywhere, we may cite something which he wrote of himself to a friend of Klotz. Lessing, it will be remembered, had literally "suppressed" Klotz. "What do you apprehend, then, from me? The more faults and errors you point out to me, so much the more I shall learn of you;

[1] "Ramler," writes Georg Forster, "ist die Ziererei, die Eigenliebe, die Eitelkeit in eigener Person."

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ASTOR, LENOX
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the more I learn of you, the more thankful shall I be. . . . I wish you knew me more thoroughly. If the opinion you have of my learning and genius (*Geist*) should perhaps suffer thereby, yet I am sure the idea I should like you to form of my character would gain. I am not the insufferable, unmannerly, proud, slanderous man Herr Klotz proclaims me. It cost me a great deal of trouble and compulsion to be a little bitter against him."[1] Ramler and the rest had contrived a nice little society for mutual admiration, much like that described by Goldsmith, if, indeed, he did not convey it from the French, as was not uncommon with him. "'What, have you never heard of the admirable Brandellius or the ingenious Mogusius, one the eye and the other the heart of our University, known all over the world?' 'Never,' cried the traveller; 'but pray inform me what Brandellius is particularly remarkable for.' 'You must be little acquainted with the republic of letters,' said the other, 'to ask such a question. Brandellius has written a most sublime panegyric on Mogusius.' 'And, prithee, what has Mogusius done to deserve so great a favor?' 'He has written an excellent poem in praise of Brandellius.'"[2] Lessing was not the man who could narrow himself to the proportions of a clique; life long he was the terror of the Brandellii and Mogusii, and, at the signal given by him,

[1] Lessing to Von Murr, 25th November, 1768. The whole letter is well worth reading.

[2] Review of Dunkins's *Epistle to Lord Chesterfield.*

"They, but now who seemed
In bigness to surpass Earth's giant sons,
Now less than smallest dwarfs in narrow room
Throng numberless."

Besides whatever other reasons Lessing may have had for leaving Berlin, I fancy that his having exhausted whatever means it had of helping his spiritual growth was the chief. Nine years later, he gave as a reason for not wishing to stay long in Brunswick, "Not that I do not like Brunswick, but because nothing comes of being long in a place which one likes."[1] Whatever the reason, Lessing, in 1760, left Berlin for Breslau, where the post of secretary had been offered him under Frederick's tough old General Tauentzien. "I will spin myself in for a while like an ugly worm, that I may be able to come to light again as a brilliant winged creature," says his diary. Shortly after his leaving Berlin, he was chosen a member of the Academy of Sciences there. Herr Stahr, who has no little fondness for the foot-light style of phrase, says, "It may easily be imagined that he himself regarded his appointment as an insult rather than as an honor." Lessing himself merely says that it was a matter of indifference to him, which is much more in keeping with his character and with the value of the intended honor.

The Seven Years' War began four years before

[1] A favorite phrase of his, which Egbert has preserved for us with its Saxon accent, was, *Es kommt doch nischt dabey heraus*, implying that one might do something better for a constancy than shearing swine.

Lessing took up his abode in Breslau, and it may be asked how he, as a Saxon, was affected by it. I might answer, hardly at all. His position was that of armed neutrality. Long ago at Leipzig he had been accused of Prussian leanings; now in Berlin he was thought too Saxon. Though he disclaimed any such sentiment as patriotism, and called himself a cosmopolite, it is plain enough that his position was simply that of a German. Love of country, except in a very narrow parochial way, was as impossible in Germany then as in America during the Colonial period. Lessing himself, in the latter years of his life, was librarian of one of those petty princelets who sold their subjects to be shot at in America, — creatures strong enough to oppress, too weak to protect their people. Whoever would have found a Germany to love must have pieced it together as painfully as Isis did the scattered bits of Osiris. Yet he says that "the true patriot is by no means extinguished" in him. It was the noisy ones that he could not abide; and, writing to Gleim about his "Grenadier" verses, he advises him to soften the tone of them a little, he himself being a "declared enemy of imprecations," which he would leave altogether to the clergy. I think Herr Stahr makes too much of these anti-patriot flings of Lessing, which, with a single exception, occur in his letters to Gleim, and with reference to a kind of verse that could not but be distasteful to him, as needing no more brains than a drum, nor other inspiration than serves a trumpet. Lessing undoubtedly had

better uses for his breath than to spend it in shouting for either side in this "bloody lawsuit," as he called it, in which he was not concerned. He showed himself German enough, and in the right way, in his persistent warfare against the tyranny of French taste. Goethe long afterwards incurred the same reproach and with as much reason.

He remained in Breslau the better part of five years, studying life in new phases, gathering a library, which, as commonly happens, he afterwards sold at great loss, and writing his *Minna* and his *Laocoön*. He accompanied Tauentzien to the siege of Schweidnitz, where Frederick was present in person. He seems to have lived a rather free-and-easy life during his term of office, kept shockingly late hours, and learned, among other things, to gamble, — a fact for which Herr Stahr thinks it needful to account in a high philosophical fashion. I prefer to think that there are *some* motives to which remarkable men are liable in common with the rest of mankind, and that they may occasionally do a thing merely because it is pleasant, without forethought of medicinal benefit to the mind. Lessing's friends (whose names were *not*, as the reader might be tempted to suppose, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar) expected him to make something handsome out of his office; but the pitiful result of those five years of opportunity was nothing more than an immortal book. Unthrifty Lessing, to have been so nice about your fingers, (and so near the mint, too,) when your general was wise enough to make his fortune! As if ink-stains were the

only ones that would wash out, and no others had ever been covered with white kid from the sight of all reasonable men! In July, 1764, he had a violent fever, which he turned to account in his usual cheerful way: "The serious epoch of my life is drawing nigh. I am beginning to become a man, and flatter myself that in this burning fever I have raved away the last remains of my youthful follies. Fortunate illness!" He had never intended to bind himself to an official career. To his father he writes: "I have more than once declared that my present engagement could not continue long, that I have not given up my old plan of living, and that I am more than ever resolved to withdraw from any service that is not wholly to my mind. I have passed the middle of my life, and can think of nothing that could compel me to make myself a slave for the poor remainder of it. I write you this, dearest father, and must write you this, in order that you may not be astonished if, before long, you should see me once more very far removed from all hopes of, or claims to, a settled prosperity, as it is called." Before the middle of the next year he was back in Berlin again.

There he remained for nearly two years, trying the house-top way of life again, but with indifferent success, as we have reason to think. Indeed, when the metaphor resolves itself into the plain fact of living just on the other side of the roof, — in the garret, namely, — and that from hand to mouth, as was Lessing's case, we need not be surprised to find him gradually beginning to see

something more agreeable in a *fixirtes Glück* than he had once been willing to allow. At any rate, he was willing, and even heartily desirous, that his friends should succeed in getting for him the place of royal librarian. But Frederick, for some unexplained reason, would not appoint him. Herr Stahr thinks it had something to do with the old *Siècle* manuscript business. But this seems improbable, for Voltaire's wrath was not directed against Lessing; and even if it had been, the great king could hardly have carried the name of an obscure German author in his memory through all those anxious and warlike years. Whatever the cause, Lessing early in 1767 accepts the position of Theatrical Manager at Hamburg, as usual not too much vexed with disappointment, but quoting gayly

"Quod non dant proceres, dabit histrio."

Like Burns, he was always "contented wi' little and canty wi' mair." In connection with his place as Manager he was to write a series of dramatic essays and criticisms. It is to this we owe the *Dramaturgie*, next to the *Laocoön* the most valuable of his works. But Lessing, though it is plain that he made his hand as light as he could, and wrapped his lash in velvet, soon found that actors had no more taste for truth than authors. He was obliged to drop his remarks on the special merits or demerits of players, and to confine himself to those of the pieces represented. By this his work gained in value; and the latter part of it, written without reference to a particular stage, and devoted to the discussion of those general principles

of dramatic art on which he had meditated long and deeply, is far weightier than the rest. There are few men who can put forth all their muscle in a losing race, and it is characteristic of Lessing that what he wrote under the dispiritment of failure should be the most lively and vigorous. Circumstances might be against him, but he was incapable of believing that a cause could be lost which had once enlisted his conviction.

The theatrical enterprise did not prosper long; but Lessing had meanwhile involved himself as partner in a publishing business which harassed him while it lasted, and when it failed, as was inevitable, left him hampered with debt. Help came in his appointment (1770) to take charge of the Duke of Brunswick's library at Wolfenbüttel, with a salary of six hundred thalers a year. This was the more welcome, as he soon after was betrothed with Eva König, widow of a rich manufacturer.[1] Her husband's affairs, however, had been left in confusion, and this, with Lessing's own embarrass-

[1] I find surprisingly little about Lessing in such of the contemporary correspondence of German literary men as I have read. A letter of Boie to Merck (10 April, 1775) gives us a glimpse of him. "Do you know that Lessing will probably marry Reiske's widow and come to Dresden in place of Hagedorn? The restless spirit! How he will get along with the artists, half of them, too, Italians, is to be seen. . . . Liffert and he have met and parted good friends. He has worn ever since on his finger the ring with the skeleton and butterfly which Liffert gave him. He is reported to be much dissatisfied with the theatrical filibustering of Goethe and Lenz, especially with the remarks on the drama in which so little respect is shown for his Aristotle, and the Leipzig folks are said to be greatly rejoiced at getting such an ally."

ments, prevented their being married till October, 1776. Eva König was every way worthy of him. Clever, womanly, discreet, with just enough coyness of the will to be charming when it is joined with sweetness and good sense, she was the true helpmate of such a man, the serious companion of his mind and the playfellow of his affections. There is something infinitely refreshing to me in the love-letters of these two persons. Without wanting sentiment, there is such a bracing air about them as breathes from the higher levels and strongholds of the soul. They show that self-possession which can alone reserve to love the power of new self-surrender, of never cloying, because never wholly possessed. Here is no invasion and conquest of the weaker nature by the stronger, but an equal league of souls, each in its own realm still sovereign. Turn from such letters as these to those of St. Preux and Julie, and you are stifled with the heavy perfume of a demirep's boudoir, — to those of Herder to his Caroline, and you sniff no doubtful odor of professional unction from the sermon-case. Manly old Dr. Johnson, who could be tender and true to a plain woman, knew very well what he meant when he wrote that single poetic sentence of his, — "The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him to be a native of the rocks."

In January, 1778, Lessing's wife died from the effects of a difficult childbirth. The child, a boy, hardly survived its birth. The few words wrung out of Lessing by this double sorrow are to me as

deeply moving as anything in tragedy. "I wished for once to be as happy (*es so gut haben*) as other men. But it has gone ill with me!" "And I was so loath to lose him, this son!" "My wife is dead; and I have had this experience also. I rejoice that I have not many more such experiences left to make, and am quite cheerful." "If you had known her! But they say that to praise one's wife is self-praise. Well, then, I say no more of her! But if you had known her!" *Quite cheerful!* I can recollect nothing more pathetic except Swift's "Only a lock of hair." On the 10th of August he writes to Elise Reimarus,—he is writing to a woman now, an old friend of his and of his wife, and will be less restrained: "I am left here all alone. I have not a single friend to whom I can wholly confide myself. . . . How often must I curse my ever wishing to be for once as happy as other men! How often have I wished myself back again in my old, isolated condition,—to be nothing, to wish nothing, to do nothing, but what the present moment brings with it! . . . Yet I am too proud to think myself unhappy. I just grind my teeth, and let the boat go as pleases wind and waves. Enough that I will not overset it myself." It is plain from this letter that suicide had been in his mind, and, with his antique way of thinking on many subjects, he would hardly have looked on it as a crime. But he was too brave a man to throw up the sponge to fate, and had work to do yet. Within a few days of his wife's death he wrote to Eschenburg: "I am right heartily ashamed if my letter betrayed the

least despair. Despair is not nearly so much my failing as levity, which often expresses itself with a little bitterness and misanthropy." A stoic, not from insensibility or cowardice, as so many are, but from stoutness of heart, he blushes at a moment's abdication of self-command. And he will not roil the clear memory of his love with any tinge of the sentimentality so much the fashion, and to be had so cheap, in that generation. There is a moderation of sincerity peculiar to Lessing in the epithet of the following sentence: "How dearly must I pay for the single year I have lived with a *sensible* wife!" "Werther" had then been published four years. Lessing's grief has that pathos which he praised in sculpture, — he may writhe, but he must not scream. Nor is this a new thing with him. On the death of a younger brother, he wrote to his father, fourteen years before: "Why should those who grieve communicate their grief to each other purposely to increase it? . . . Many mourn in death what they loved not living. I will love in life what nature bids me love, and after death strive to bewail it as little as I can."

I think Herr Stahr is on his stilts again when he speaks of Lessing's position at Wolfenbüttel. He calls it an "assuming the chains of feudal service, being buried in a corner, a martyrdom that consumed the best powers of his mind and crushed him in body and spirit forever." To crush *forever* is rather a strong phrase, Herr Stahr, to be applied to the spirit, if one must ever give heed to the sense as well as the sound of what one is writing. But

eloquence has no bowels for its victims. I have no doubt the Duke of Brunswick meant well by Lessing, and the salary he paid him was as large as he would have got from the frugal Frederick. But one whose trade it was to be a Duke could hardly have had much sympathy with his librarian after he had once found out what he really was. For even if he was not, as Herr Stahr affirms, a republican, and I doubt very much if he was, yet he was not a man who could play with ideas in the light French fashion. At the ardent touch of his sincerity, they took fire, and grew dangerous to what is called the social fabric. The logic of wit, with its momentary flash, is a very different thing from that consequent logic of thought, pushing forward its deliberate sap day and night with a fixed object, which belonged to Lessing. The men who attack abuses are not so much to be dreaded by the reigning house of Superstition as those who, as Dante says, syllogize hateful truths. As for "the chains of feudal service," they might serve a Fenian Head-Centre on a pinch, but are wholly out of place here. The slavery that Lessing had really taken on him was that of a great library, an Alcina that could always too easily witch him away from the more serious duty of his genius. That a mind like his could be buried in a corner is mere twaddle, and of a kind that has done great wrong to the dignity of letters. Wherever Lessing sat, was the head of the table. That he suffered at Wolfenbüttel is true; but was it nothing to be in love and in debt at the same time, and to feel that

his fruition of the one must be postponed for uncertain years by his own folly in incurring the other? If the sparrow-life must end, surely a wee bush is better than nae beild. One cause of Lessing's occasional restlessness and discontent Herr Stahr has failed to notice. It is evident from many passages in his letters that he had his share of the hypochondria which goes with an imagnative temperament. But in him it only serves to bring out in stronger relief his deep-rooted manliness. He spent no breath in that melodious whining which, beginning with Rousseau, has hardly yet gone out of fashion. Work of some kind was his medicine for the blues, — if not always of the kind he would have chosen, then the best that was to be had; since the useful, too, had for him a sweetness of its own. Sometimes he found a congenial labor in rescuing, as he called it, the memory of some dead scholar or thinker from the wrongs of ignorance or prejudice or falsehood; sometimes in fishing a manuscript out of the ooze of oblivion, and giving it, after a critical cleansing, to the world. Now and then he warmed himself and kept his muscle in trim with buffeting soundly the champions of that shallow artificiality and unctuous wordiness, one of which passed for orthodox in literature, and the other in theology. True religion and creative genius were both so beautiful to him that he could never abide the mediocre counterfeit of either, and he who put so much of his own life into all he wrote could not but hold all scripture sacred in which a divine soul had re-

corded itself. It would be doing Lessing great wrong to confound his controversial writing with the paltry quarrels of authors. His own personal relations enter into them surprisingly little, for his quarrel was never with men, but with falsehood, cant, and misleading tradition, in whomsoever incarnated. Save for this, they were no longer readable, and might be relegated to that herbarium of Billingsgate gathered by the elder Disraeli.

So far from being "crushed in spirit" at Wolfenbüttel, the years he spent there were among the most productive of his life. "Emilia Galotti," begun in 1758, was finished there and published in 1771. The controversy with Götze, by far the most important he was engaged in, and the one in which he put forth his maturest powers, was carried on thence. His "Nathan the Wise" (1779), by which almost alone he is known as a poet outside of Germany, was conceived and composed there. The last few years of his life were darkened by ill-health and the depression which it brings. His Nathan had not the success he hoped. It is sad to see the strong, self-sufficing man casting about for a little sympathy, even for a little praise. "It is really needful to me that you should have some small good opinion of it [Nathan], in order to make me once more contented with myself," he writes to Elise Reimarus in May, 1779. That he was weary of polemics, and dissatified with himself for letting them distract him from better things, appears from his last pathetic letter to the old friend he loved and valued most, — Men-

delssohn. "And in truth, dear friend, I sorely need a letter like yours from time to time, if I am not to become wholly out of humor. I think you do not know me as a man that has a very hot hunger for praise. But the coldness with which the world is wont to convince certain people that they do not suit it, if not deadly, yet stiffens one with chill. I am not astonished that *all* I have written lately does not please *you*. . . . At best, a passage here and there may have cheated you by recalling our better days. I, too, was then a sound, slim sapling, and am now such a rotten, gnarled trunk!" This was written on the 19th of December, 1780; and on the 15th of February, 1781, Lessing died, not quite fifty-two years old. Goethe was then in his thirty-second year, and Schiller ten years younger.

Of Lessing's relation to metaphysics the reader will find ample discussion in Herr Stahr's volumes. We are not particularly concerned with them, because his interest in such questions was purely speculative, and because he was more concerned to exercise the powers of his mind than to analyze them. His chief business, his master impulse always, was to be a man of letters in the narrower sense of the term. Even into theology he only made occasional raids across the border, as it were, and that not so much with a purpose of reform as in defence of principles which applied equally to the whole domain of thought. He had even less sympathy with heterodoxy than

with orthodoxy, and, so far from joining a party or wishing to form one, would have left belief a matter of choice to the individual conscience. "From the bottom of my heart I hate all those people who wish to found sects. For it is not error, but sectarian error, yes, even sectarian truth, that makes men unhappy, or would do so if truth would found a sect." [1] Again he says, that in his theological controversies he is "much less concerned about theology than about sound common-sense, and only therefore prefer the old orthodox (at bottom *tolerant*) theology to the new (at bottom *intolerant*), because the former openly conflicts with sound common-sense, while the latter would fain corrupt it. I reconcile myself with my open enemies in order the better to be on my guard against my secret ones." [2] At another time he tells his brother that he has a wholly false notion of his (Lessing's) relation to orthodoxy. "Do you suppose I grudge the world that anybody should seek to enlighten it? — that I do not heartily wish that every one should think rationally about religion? I should loathe myself if even in my scribblings I had any other end than to help forward those great views. But let me choose my own way, which I think best for this purpose. And what is simpler than this way? I would not have the impure water, which has long been unfit to use, preserved; but I would not have it thrown away before we know whence to get purer . . . Orthodoxy, thank God, we

[1] To his brother Karl, 20th April, 1774.
[2] To the same, 20th March, 1777.

were pretty well done with; a partition-wall had been built between it and Philosophy, behind which each could go her own way without troubling the other. But what are they doing now? They are tearing down this wall, and, under the pretext of making us rational Christians, are making us very irrational philosophers. . . . We are agreed that our old religious system is false; but I cannot say with you that it is a patch-work of bunglers and half-philosophers. I know nothing in the world in which human acuteness has been more displayed or exercised than in that." [1] Lessing was always for freedom, never for looseness, of thought, still less for laxity of principle. But it must be a real freedom, and not that vain struggle to become a majority, which, if it succeed, escapes from heresy only to make heretics of the other side. *Abire ad plures* would with him have meant, not bodily but spiritual death. He did not love the fanaticism of innovation a whit better than that of conservatism. To his sane understanding, both were equally hateful, as different masks of the same selfish bully. Coleridge said that toleration was impossible till indifference made it worthless. Lessing did not wish for toleration, because that implies authority, nor could his earnest temper have conceived of indifference. But he thought it as absurd to regulate opinion as the color of the hair. Here, too, he would have agreed with Selden, that "it is a vain thing to talk of an heretic, for a man for his heart cannot think any

[1] To his brother Karl, 2d February, 1774.

otherwise than he does think." Herr Stahr's chapters on this point, bating a little exaltation of tone, are very satisfactory; though, in his desire to make a leader of Lessing, he almost represents him as being what he shunned, — the founder of a sect. The fact is, that Lessing only formulated in his own way a general movement of thought, and what mainly interests us is that in him we see a layman, alike indifferent to clerisy and heresy, giving energetic and pointed utterance to those opinions of his class which the clergy are content to ignore so long as they remain esoteric. At present the world has advanced to where Lessing stood, while the Church has done its best to stand stock-still; and it would be a curious were it not a melancholy spectacle, to see the indifference with which the laity look on while theologians thrash their wheatless straw, utterly unconscious that there is no longer any common term possible that could bring their creeds again to any point of bearing on the practical life of men. Fielding never made a profounder stroke of satire than in Squire Western's indignant "Art not in the pulpit now! When art got up there, I never mind what dost say."

As an author, Lessing began his career at a period when we cannot say that German literature was at its lowest ebb, only because there had not yet been any flood-tide. That may be said to have begun with him. When we say German literature, we mean so much of it as has any interest outside of Germany. That part of the literary histories which treats of the dead waste and middle of the

eighteenth century reads like a collection of obituaries, and were better reduced to the conciseness of epitaph, though the authors of them seem to find a melancholy pleasure, much like that of undertakers, in the task by which they live. Gottsched reigned supreme on the legitimate throne of dulness. In Switzerland, Bodmer essayed a more republican form of the same authority. At that time a traveller reports eight hundred authors in Zürich alone! Young aspirant for lettered fame, in imagination clear away the lichens from their forgotten headstones, and read humbly the "As I am, so thou must be," on all! Everybody remembers how Goethe, in the seventh book of his autobiography, tells the story of his visit to Gottsched. He enters by mistake an inner room at the moment when a frightened servant brings the discrowned potentate a periwig large enough to reach to the elbows. That awful emblem of pretentious sham seems to be the best type of the literature then predominant. We always fancy it set upon a pole, like Gessler's hat, with nothing in it that was not wooden, for all men to bow down before. The periwig style had its natural place in the age of Louis XIV., and there were certainly brains under it. But it had run out in France, as the tie-wig style of Pope had in England. In Germany it was the mere imitation of an imitation. Will it be believed that Gottsched recommends his Art of Poetry to beginners, in preference to Breitinger's, because it "*will enable them to produce every species of poem in a correct style*, while out of that

no one can learn to make an ode or a cantata"? "Whoever," he says, "buys Breitinger's book *in order to learn how to make poems*, will too late regret his money."[1] Gottsched, perhaps, did some service even by his advocacy of French models, by calling attention to the fact that there *was* such a thing as style, and that it was of some consequence. But not one of the authors of that time can be said to survive, nor to be known even by name except to Germans, unless it be Klopstock, Herder, Wieland, and Gellert. And the latter's immortality, such as it is, reminds us somewhat of that Lady Gosling's, whose obituary stated that she was "mentioned by Mrs. Barbauld in her Life of Richardson 'under the name of Miss M., afterwards Lady G.'" Klopstock himself is rather remembered for what he was than what he is, — an immortality of preteriteness; and we much doubt if many Germans put the "Oberon" in their trunks when they start on a journey. Herder alone survives, if not as a contributor to literature, strictly so called, yet as a thinker and as part of the intellectual impulse of the day. But at the time, though there were two parties, yet within the lines of each there was a loyal reciprocity of what is called on such occasions appreciation. Wig ducked to wig, each blockhead had a brother, and there was a universal apotheosis of the mediocrity of our set. If the greatest happiness of the greatest number be the true theory, this was all that could be desired. Even Lessing at one time looked up to Hagedorn as the Ger-

[1] Gervinus, iv. 62.

man Horace. If Hagedorn were pleased, what mattered it to Horace? Worse almost than this was the universal pedantry. The solemn bray of one pedagogue was taken up and prolonged in a thousand echoes. There was not only no originality, but no desire for it, — perhaps even a dread of it, as something that would break the *entente cordiale* of placid mutual assurance. No great writer had given that tone of good-breeding to the language which would gain it entrance to the society of European literature. No man of genius had made it a necessity of polite culture. It was still as rudely provincial as the Scotch of Allan Ramsay. Frederick the Great was to be forgiven if, with his practical turn, he gave himself wholly to French, which had replaced Latin as a cosmopolitan tongue. It had lightness, ease, fluency, elegance, lucidity — in short, all the good qualities that German lacked. The study of French models was perhaps the best thing for German literature before it got out of long-clothes. It was bad only when it became a tradition and a tyranny. Lessing did more than any other man to overthrow this foreign usurpation when it had done its work.

The same battle had to be fought on English soil also, and indeed is hardly over yet. For the renewed outbreak of the old quarrel between Classical and Romantic grew out of nothing more than an attempt of the modern spirit to free itself from laws of taste laid down by the *Grand Siècle*. But we must not forget the debt which all modern prose literature owes to France. It is true that Machia-

velli was the first to write with classic pith and point in a living language; but he is, for all that, properly an ancient. Montaigne is really the first modern writer, — the first who assimilated his Greek and Latin, and showed that an author might be original and charming, even classical, if he did not try too hard. He is also the first modern critic, and his judgments of the writers of antiquity are those of an equal. He made the ancients his servants, to help him think in Gascon French; and, in spite of his endless quotations, began the crusade against pedantry. It was not, however, till a century later, that the reform became complete in France, and then crossed the Channel. Milton is still a pedant in his prose, and not seldom even in his great poem. Dryden was the first Englishman who wrote perfectly easy prose, and he owed his style and turn of thought to his French reading. His learning sits easily on him, and has a modern cut. So far, the French influence was one of unmixed good, for it rescued us from pedantry. It must have done something for Germany in the same direction. For its effect on poetry we cannot say as much; and its traditions had themselves become pedantry in another shape when Lessing made an end of it. He himself certainly learned to write prose of Diderot; and whatever Herr Stahr may think of it, his share in the "Letters on German Literature" got its chief inspiration from France.

It is in the *Dramaturgie* that Lessing first properly enters as an influence into European literature.

He may be said to have begun the revolt from pseudo-classicism in poetry, and to have been thus unconsciously the founder of romanticism. Wieland's translation of Shakespeare had, it is true, appeared in 1762; but Lessing was the first critic whose profound knowledge of the Greek drama and apprehension of its principles gave weight to his judgment, who recognized in what the true greatness of the poet consisted, and found him to be really nearer the Greeks than any other modern. This was because Lessing looked always more to the life than the form, because he knew the classics and did not merely cant about them. But if the authority of Lessing, by making people feel easy in their admiration for Shakespeare, perhaps increased the influence of his works, and if his discussions of Aristotle have given a new starting-point to modern criticism, it may be doubted whether the immediate effect on literature of his own critical essays was so great as Herr Stahr supposes. Surely "Götz" and "The Robbers" are nothing like what he would have called Shakespearian, and the whole *Sturm und Drang* tendency would have roused in him nothing but antipathy. Fixed principles in criticism are useful in helping us to form a judgment of works already produced, but it is questionable whether they are not rather a hindrance than a help to living production. Ben Jonson was a fine critic, intimate with the classics as few men have either the leisure or the strength of mind to be in this age of many books, and built regular plays long before they were heard of in

France. But he continually trips and falls flat over his metewand of classical propriety, his personages are abstractions, and fortunately neither his precepts nor his practice influenced any one of his greater coevals.[1] In breadth of understanding, and the gravity of purpose that comes of it, he was far above Fletcher or Webster, but how far below either in the subtler, the incalculable, qualities of a dramatic poet! Yet Ben, with his principles off, could soar and sing with the best of them; and there are strains in his lyrics which Herrick, the most Catullian of poets since Catullus, could imitate, but never match. A constant reference to the statutes which taste has codified would only bewilder the creative instinct. Criticism can at best teach writers without genius what is to be avoided or imitated. It cannot communicate life; and its effect, when reduced to rules, has commonly been to produce that correctness which is so praiseworthy and so intolerable. It cannot give taste, it can only demonstrate who has had it. Lessing's essays in this kind were of service to German literature by their manliness of style, whose example

[1] It should be considered, by those sagacious persons who think that the most marvellous intellect of which we have any record could not master so much Latin and Greek as would serve a sophomore, that Shakespeare must through conversation have possessed himself of whatever principles of art Ben Jonson and the other university men had been able to deduce from their study of the classics. That they should not have discussed these matters over their sack at the Mermaid is incredible; that Shakespeare, who left not a drop in any orange he squeezed, could not also have got all the juice out of this one, is even more so.

was worth a hundred treatises, and by the stimulus there is in all original thinking. Could he have written such a poem as he was capable of conceiving, his influence would have been far greater. It is the living soul, and not the metaphysical abstraction of it, that is genetic in literature. If to do were as easy as to know what were good to be done! It was out of his own failures to reach the ideal he saw so clearly, that Lessing drew the wisdom which made him so admirable a critic. Even here, too, genius can profit by no experience but its own.

For, in spite of Herr Stahr's protest, we must acknowledge the truth of Lessing's own characteristic confession, that he was no poet. A man of genius he unquestionably was, if genius may be claimed no less for force than fineness of mind, — for the intensity of conviction that inspires the understanding as much as for that apprehension of beauty which gives energy of will to imagination, — but a poetic genius he was not. His mind kindled by friction in the process of thinking, not in the flash of conception, and its delight is in demonstration, not in bodying forth. His prose can leap and run, his verse is always thinking of its feet. Yet in his *Minna* and his *Emilia*[1] he shows one

[1] In *Minna* and *Emilia* Lessing followed the lead of Diderot. In the Preface to the second edition of Diderot's *Théâtre*, he says: "I am very conscious that my taste, without Diderot's example and teaching, would have taken quite another direction. Perhaps one more my own, yet hardly one with which my understanding would in the long run have been so well content." Diderot's choice of prose was dictated and justified by the ac-

faculty of the dramatist, that of construction, in a higher degree than any other German.[1] Here his critical deductions served him to some purpose. The action moves rapidly, there is no speechifying, and the parts are coherent. Both plays act better than anything of Goethe or Schiller. But it is the story that interests us, and not the characters. These are not, it is true, the incorporation of certain ideas, or, still worse, of certain dogmas, but they certainly seem something like machines by which the motive of the play is carried on; and there is nothing of that interplay of plot and character which makes Shakespeare more real in the closet than other dramatists with all the helps of

centual poverty of his mother-tongue. Lessing certainly revised his judgment on this point (for it was not equally applicable to German), and wrote his maturer *Nathan* in what he took for blank verse. There was much kindred between the minds of the two men. Diderot always seems to me a kind of deboshed Lessing. Lessing was also indebted to Burke, Hume, the two Wartons, and Hurd, among other English writers. Not that he borrowed anything of them but the quickening of his own thought. It should be remembered that Rousseau was seventeen, Diderot and Sterne sixteen, and Winckelmann twelve years older than Lessing. Wieland was four years younger.

[1] Goethe's appreciation of Lessing grew with his years. He writes to Lavater, 18th March, 1781: "Lessing's death has greatly depressed me. I had much pleasure in him and much hope of him." This is a little patronizing in tone. But in the last year of his life, talking with Eckermann, he naturally antedates his admiration, as reminiscence is wont to do: "You can conceive what an effect this piece (*Minna*) had upon us young people. It was, in fact, a shining meteor. It made us aware that something higher existed than anything whereof that feeble literary epoch had a notion. The first two acts are truly a masterpiece of exposition, from which one learned much and can always learn."

the theatre. It is a striking illustration at once of the futility of mere critical insight and of Lessing's want of imagination, that in the *Emilia* he should have thought a Roman motive consistent with modern habits of thought, and that in *Nathan* he should have been guilty of anachronisms which violate not only the accidental truth of fact, but the essential truth of character. Even if we allowed him imagination, it must be only on the lower plane of prose; for of verse as anything more than so many metrical feet he had not the faintest notion. Of that exquisite sympathy with the movement of the mind, with every swifter or slower pulse of passion, which proves it another species from prose, the very ἀφροδίτη καὶ λύρα of speech, and not merely a higher form of it, he wanted the fineness of sense to conceive. If we compare the prose of Dante or Milton, though both were eloquent, with their verse, we see at once which was the more congenial to them. Lessing has passages of freer and more harmonious utterance in some of his most careless prose essays, than can be found in his *Nathan* from the first line to the last. In the *numeris lege solutis* he is often snatched beyond himself, and becomes truly dithyrambic; in his pentameters the march of the thought is comparatively hampered and irresolute. His best things are not poetically delicate, but have the tougher fibre of proverbs. Is it not enough, then, to be a great prose-writer? They are as rare as great poets, and if Lessing have the gift to stir and to dilate that something deeper than the mind which genius only can reach,

what matter if it be not done to music? Of his minor poems I need say little. Verse was always more or less mechanical with him, and his epigrams are almost all stiff, as if they were bad translations from the Latin. Many of them are shockingly coarse, and in liveliness are on a level with those of our Elizabethan period. Herr Stahr, of course, cannot bear to give them up, even though Gervinus be willing. The prettiest of his shorter poems (*Die Namen*) has been appropriated by Coleridge, who has given it a grace which it wants in the original. His *Nathan*, by a poor translation of which he is chiefly known to English readers, is an Essay on Toleration in the form of a dialogue. As a play, it has not the interest of *Minna* or *Emilia*, though the Germans, who have a praiseworthy national stoicism where one of their great writers is concerned, find in seeing it represented a grave satisfaction, like that of subscribing to a monument. There is a sober lustre of reflection in it that makes it very good reading; but it wants the molten interfusion of thought and phrase which only imagination can achieve.

As Lessing's mind was continually advancing, always open to new impressions, and capable, as very few are, of apprehending the many-sidedness of truth, as he had the rare quality of being honest with himself, his works seem fragmentary, and give at first an impression of incompleteness. But one learns at length to recognize and value this very incompleteness as characteristic of the man who was growing lifelong, and to whom the

selfish thought that any share of truth could be exclusively *his* was an impossibility. At the end of the ninety-fifth number of the *Dramaturgie* he says: "I remind my readers here, that these pages are by no means intended to contain a dramatic system. I am accordingly not bound to solve all the difficulties which I raise. I am quite willing that my thoughts should seem to want connection, — nay, even to contradict each other, — if only there are thoughts in which they [my readers] find material for thinking themselves. I wish to do nothing more than scatter the *fermenta cognitionis*." That is Lessing's great praise, and gives its chief value to his works, a value, indeed, imperishable, and of the noblest kind. No writer can leave a more precious legacy to posterity than this; and beside this shining merit, all mere literary splendors look pale and cold. There is that life in Lessing's thought which engenders life, and not only thinks for us, but makes us think. Not sceptical, but forever testing and inquiring, it is out of the cloud of his own doubt that the flash comes at last with sudden and vivid illumination. Flashes they indeed are, his finest intuitions, and of very different quality from the equable north-light of the artist. He felt it, and said it of himself, "Ever so many flashes of lightning do not make daylight." We speak now of those more remembrable passages where his highest individuality reveals itself in what may truly be called a passion of thought. In the "Laocoön" there is daylight of the serenest temper, and never was there a

better example of the discourse of reason, though even that is also a fragment.

But it is as a nobly original man, even more than as an original thinker, that Lessing is precious to us, and that he is so considerable in German literature. In a higher sense, but in the same kind, he is to Germans what Dr. Johnson is to us, — admirable for what he was. Like Johnson's, too, but still from a loftier plane, a great deal of his thought has a direct bearing on the immediate life and interests of men. His genius was not a St. Elmo's fire, as it so often is with mere poets, — as it was in Shelley, for example, playing in ineffectual flame about the points of his thought, — but was interfused with his whole nature and made a part of his very being. To the Germans, with their weak nerve of sentimentalism, his brave common-sense is a far wholesomer tonic than the cynicism of Heine, which is, after all, only sentimentalism soured. His jealousy for maintaining the just boundaries whether of art or speculation may warn them to check with timely dikes the tendency of their thought to diffuse inundation. Their fondness in æsthetic discussion for a nomenclature subtile enough to split a hair at which even a Thomist would have despaired, is rebuked by the clear simplicity of his style.[1] But he is no exclusive property of Germany. As a complete man, constant, generous, full of honest courage as a hardy follower of Thought wherever she might lead him, above

[1] Nothing can be droller than the occasional translation by Vischer of a sentence of Lessing into his own jargon.

all, as a confessor of that Truth which is forever revealing itself to the seeker, and is the more loved because never wholly revealable, he is an ennobling possession of mankind. Let his own striking words characterize him : —

" Not the truth of which any one is, or supposes himself to be, possessed, but the upright endeavor he has made to arrive at truth, makes the worth of the man. For not by the possession, but by the investigation, of truth are his powers expanded, wherein alone his ever-growing perfection consists. Possession makes us easy, indolent, proud.

" If God held all truth shut in his right hand, and in his left nothing but the ever-restless instinct for truth, though with the condition of for ever and ever erring, and should say to me, Choose! I should bow humbly to his left hand, and say, Father, give! pure truth is for Thee alone! "

It is not without reason that fame is awarded only after death. The dust-cloud of notoriety which follows and envelops the men who drive with the wind bewilders contemporary judgment. Lessing, while he lived, had little reward for his labor but the satisfaction inherent in all work faithfully done ; the highest, no doubt, of which human nature is capable, and yet perhaps not so sweet as that sympathy of which the world's praise is but an index. But if to perpetuate herself beyond the grave in healthy and ennobling influences be the noblest aspiration of the mind, and its fruition the only reward she would have deemed worthy of herself, then is Lessing to be counted thrice for-

tunate. Every year since he was laid prematurely in the earth has seen his power for good increase, and made him more precious to the hearts and intellects of men. "Lessing," said Goethe, "would have declined the lofty title of a Genius; but his enduring influence testifies against himself. On the other hand, we have in literature other and indeed important names of men who, while they lived, were esteemed great geniuses, but whose influence ended with their lives, and who, accordingly, were less than they and others thought. For, as I have said, there is no genius without a productive power that continues forever operative." [1]

[1] Eckermann, *Gespräche mit Goethe*, iii. 229.

ROUSSEAU AND THE SENTIMENTALISTS[1]

1867

"We have had the great professor and founder of the philosophy of Vanity in England. As I had good opportunities of knowing his proceedings almost from day to day, he left no doubt in my mind that he entertained no principle either to influence his heart or to guide his understanding but vanity; with this vice he was possessed to a degree little short of madness. Benevolence to the whole species, and want of feeling for every individual with whom the professors come in contact, form the character of the new philosophy. Setting up for an unsocial independence, this their hero of vanity refuses the just price of common labor, as well as the tribute which opulence owes to genius, and which, when paid, honors the giver and the receiver, and then pleads his beggary as an excuse for his crimes. He melts with tenderness for those only who touch him by the remotest relation, and then, without one natural pang, casts away, as a sort of offal and excrement, the spawn of his dis-

[1] *Histoire des Idées Morales et Politiques en France au XVIIIme Siècle.* Par M. Jules Barni, Professeur à l'Académie de Genève. Tome ii. Paris. 1867.

gustful amours, and sends his children to the hospital of foundlings. The bear loves, licks, and forms her young; but bears are not philosophers."

This was Burke's opinion of the only contemporary who can be said to rival him in fervid and sustained eloquence, to surpass him in grace and persuasiveness of style. Perhaps we should have been more thankful to him if he had left us instead a record of those "proceedings almost from day to day" which he had such "good opportunities of knowing," but it probably never entered his head that posterity might care as much about the doings of the citizen of Geneva as about the sayings of even a British Right Honorable. Vanity eludes recognition by its victims in more shapes, and more pleasing, than any other passion, and perhaps had Mr. Burke been able imaginatively to translate Swiss Jean Jacques into Irish Edmund, he would have found no juster equivalent for the obnoxious trisyllable than "righteous self-esteem." For Burke was himself also, in the subtler sense of the word, a sentimentalist, that is, a man who took what would now be called an æsthetic view of morals and politics. No man who ever wrote English, except perhaps Mr. Ruskin, more habitually mistook his own personal likes and dislikes, tastes and distastes, for general principles, and this, it may be suspected, is the secret of all merely eloquent writing. He hints at madness as an explanation of Rousseau, and it is curious enough that Mr. Buckle was fain to explain *him* in the same way. It is not, I confess, a solution that

we find very satisfactory in this latter case. Burke's fury against the French Revolution was nothing more than was natural to a desperate man in self-defence. It was his own life, or, at least, all that made life dear to him, that was in danger. He had all that abstract political wisdom which may be naturally secreted by a magnanimous nature and a sensitive temperament, absolutely none of that rough-and-tumble kind which is so needful for the conduct of affairs. Fastidiousness is only another form of egotism; and all men who know not where to look for truth save in the narrow well of self will find their own image at the bottom, and mistake it for what they are seeking. Burke's hatred of Rousseau was genuine and instinctive. It was so genuine and so instinctive as no hatred can be but that of self, of our own weaknesses as we see them in another man. But there was also something deeper in it than this. There was mixed with it the natural dread in the political diviner of the political logician, — in the empirical, of the theoretic statesman. Burke, confounding the idea of society with the form of it then existing, would have preserved that as the only specific against anarchy. Rousseau, assuming that society as it then existed was but another name for anarchy, would have reconstituted it on an ideal basis. The one has left behind him some of the profoundest aphorisms of political wisdom; the other, some of the clearest principles of political science. The one, clinging to Divine right, found in the fact that things were, a reason that

they ought to be; the other, aiming to solve the problem of the Divine order, would deduce from that abstraction alone the claim of anything to be at all. There seems a mere oppugnancy of nature between the two, and yet both were, in different ways, the dupes of their own imaginations.

Now let us hear the opinion of a philosopher who *was* a bear, whether bears be philosophers or not. Boswell had a genuine relish for what was superior in any way, from genius to claret, and of course he did not let Rousseau escape him. "One evening at the Mitre, Johnson said sarcastically to me, 'It seems, sir, you have kept very good company abroad, — Rousseau and Wilkes!' I answered with a smile, 'My dear sir, you don't call Rousseau bad company; do you really think *him* a bad man?' JOHNSON. 'Sir, if you are talking jestingly of this, I don't talk with you. If you mean to be serious, I think him one of the worst of men, a rascal who ought to be hunted out of society, as he has been. Three or four nations have expelled him, and it is a shame that he is protected in this country. Rousseau, sir, is a very bad man. I would sooner sign a sentence for his transportation, than that of any felon who has gone from the Old Bailey these many years. Yes, I should like to have him work in the plantations.'" *We* were the plantations then, and Rousseau was destined to work there in another and much more wonderful fashion than the gruff old Ursa Major imagined. However, there is always a refreshing heartiness in his growl, a masculine bass with no snarl in it.

The Doctor's logic is of that fine old crusted Port sort, the native manufacture of the British conservative mind. Three or four nations *have*, therefore England ought. A few years later, had the Doctor been living, if three or four nations had treated their kings as France did hers, would he have thought the *ergo* a very stringent one for England?

Mr. Burke, who could speak with studied respect of the Prince of Wales, and of his vices with that charity which thinketh no evil and can afford to think no evil of so important a living member of the British Constitution, surely could have had no unmixed moral repugnance for Rousseau's "disgustful amours." It was because they were *his* that they were so loathsome. Mr. Burke was a snob, though an inspired one. Dr. Johnson, the friend of that wretchedest of lewd fellows, Richard Savage, and of that gay man about town, Topham Beauclerk, — himself sprung from an amour that would have been disgustful had it not been royal, — must also have felt something more in respect of Rousseau than the mere repugnance of virtue for vice. We must sometimes allow to personal temperament its right of peremptory challenge. Johnson had not that fine sensitiveness to the political atmosphere which made Burke presageful of coming tempest, but both of them felt that there was something dangerous in this man. Their dislike has in it somewhat of the energy of fear. Neither of them had the same feeling toward Voltaire, the man of supreme talent, but both felt that

what Rousseau was possessed by was genius, with its terrible force either to attract or repel.

> "By the pricking of my thumbs,
> Something wicked this way comes."

Burke and Johnson were both of them sincere men, both of them men of character as well as of intellectual force; and I cite their opinions of Rousseau with the respect due to an honest conviction which has apparent grounds for its adoption, whether we agree with it or no. But it strikes me as a little singular that one whose life was so full of moral inconsistency, whose character is so contemptible in many ways, in some one might almost say so revolting, should yet have exercised so deep and lasting an influence, and on minds so various, should still be an object of minute and earnest discussion, — that he should have had such vigor in his intellectual loins as to have been the father of Châteaubriand, Byron, Lamartine, George Sand, and many more in literature, in politics of Jefferson and Thomas Paine, — that the spots he had haunted should draw pilgrims so unlike as Gibbon and Napoleon, nay, should draw them still, after the lapse of near a century. Surely there must have been a basis of sincerity in this man seldom matched, if it can prevail against so many reasons for repugnance, aversion, and even disgust. He could not have been the mere sentimentalist and rhetorician for which the rough-and-ready understanding would at first glance be inclined to condemn him. In a certain sense he was both of these, but he was something more. It will bring us a

little nearer the point I am aiming at if I quote one other and more recent English opinion of him.

Mr. Thomas Moore, returning pleasantly in a travelling-carriage from a trip to Italy, in which he had never forgotten the poetical shop at home, but had carefully noted down all the pretty images that occurred to him for future use, — Mr. Thomas Moore, on his way back from a visit to his noble friend Byron, at Venice, who had there been leading a life so gross as to be talked about, even amid the crash of Napoleon's fall, and who was just writing "Don Juan" for the improvement of the world, — Mr. Thomas Moore, fresh from the reading of Byron's Memoirs, which were so scandalous that, by some hocus-pocus, three thousand guineas afterward found their way into his own pocket for consenting to suppress them, — Mr. Thomas Moore, the *ci-devant* friend of the Prince Regent, and the author of Little's Poems, among other objects of pilgrimage visits *Les Charmettes*, where Rousseau had lived with Madame de Warens. So good an opportunity for occasional verses was not to be lost, so good a text for a little virtuous moralizing not to be thrown away; and accordingly Mr. Moore pours out several pages of octosyllabic disgust at the sensuality of the dead man of genius. There was no horror for Byron. Toward him all was suavity and decorous *bienséance*. That lively sense of benefits to be received made the Irish Anacreon wink with both his little eyes. In the judgment of a liberal like Mr. Moore, were not the errors of a lord excusable? But with poor Rousseau the case was

very different. The son of a watchmaker, an outcast from boyhood up, always on the perilous edge of poverty, — what right had he to indulge himself in any immoralities? So it is always with the sentimentalists. It is never the thing in itself that is bad or good, but the thing in its relation to some conventional and mostly selfish standard. Moore could be a moralist, in this case, without any trouble, and with the advantage of winning Lord Lansdowne's approval; he could write some graceful verses which everybody would buy, and for the rest it is not hard to be a stoic in eight-syllable measure and in a travelling-carriage. The next dinner at Bowood will taste none the worse. Accordingly he speaks of

> "The mire, the strife
> And vanities of this man's life,
> Who more than all that e'er have glowed
> With fancy's flame (and it was his
> In fullest warmth and radiance) showed
> What an impostor Genius is;
> How, with that strong mimetic art
> Which forms its life and soul, it takes
> All shapes of thought, all hues of heart,
> Nor feels itself one throb it wakes;
> How, like a gem, its light may shine,
> O'er the dark path by mortals trod,
> Itself as mean a worm the while
> As crawls at midnight o'er the sod,
> . . . . . .
> How, with the pencil hardly dry
> From colouring up such scenes of love
> And beauty as make young hearts sigh,
> And dream and think through heaven they rove," &c.

Very spirited, is it not? One has only to over-

look a little threadbareness in the similes, and it is very good oratorical verse. But would we believe in it, we must never read Mr. Moore's own journal, and find out how thin a piece of veneering his own life was, — how he lived in sham till his very nature had become subdued to it, till he could persuade himself that a sham could be written into a reality, and actually made experiment thereof in his Diary.

One verse in this diatribe deserves a special comment, —

"What an impostor Genius is!"

In two respects there is nothing to be objected to in it. It is of eight syllables, and "is" rhymes unexceptionably with "his." But is there the least filament of truth in it? I venture to assert, not the least. It was not Rousseau's genius that was an impostor. It was the one thing in him that was always true. We grant that, in allowing that a man has genius. Talent is that which is in a man's power; genius is that in whose power a man is. That is the very difference between them. We might turn the tables on Moore, the man of talent, and say truly enough, What an impostor talent is! Moore talks of the mimetic power with a total misapprehension of what it really is. The mimetic power had nothing whatever to do with the affair. Rousseau had none of it; Shakespeare had it in excess; but what difference would it make in our judgment of Hamlet or Othello if a manuscript of Shakespeare's memoirs should turn up, and we should find out that he had been a pitiful

fellow? None in the world; for he is not a professed moralist, and his life does not give the warrant to his words. But if Demosthenes, after all his Philippics, throws away his shield and runs, we feel the contemptibleness of the contradiction. With genius itself we never find any fault. It would be an over-nicety that would do that. We do not get invited to nectar and ambrosia so often that we think of grumbling and saying we have better at home. No; the same genius that mastered him who wrote the poem masters us in reading it, and we care for nothing outside the poem itself. How the author lived, what he wore, how he looked, — all that is mere gossip, about which we need not trouble ourselves. Whatever he was or did, somehow or other God let him be worthy to write *this*, and that is enough for us. We forgive everything to the genius; we are inexorable to the man. Shakespeare, Goethe, Burns, — what have their biographies to do with us? Genius is not a question of character. It may be sordid, like the lamp of Aladdin, in its externals; what care we, while the touch of it builds palaces for us, makes us rich as only men in dream-land are rich, and lords to the utmost bound of imagination? So, when people talk of the ungrateful way in which the world treats its geniuses, they speak unwisely. There is no work of genius which has not been the delight of mankind, no word of genius to which the human heart and soul have not, sooner or later, responded. But the man whom the genius takes possession of for its pen, for its trowel, for its

pencil, for its chisel, *him* the world treats according to his deserts. Does Burns drink? It sets him to gauging casks of gin. For, remember, it is not to the practical world that the genius appeals; it *is* the practical world which judges of the man's fitness for its uses, and has a right so to judge. No amount of patronage could have made distilled liquors less toothsome to Robbie Burns, as no amount of them could make a Burns of the Ettrick Shepherd.

There is an old story in the *Gesta Romanorum* of a priest who was found fault with by one of his parishioners because his life was in painful discordance with his teaching. So one day he takes his critic out to a stream, and, giving him to drink of it, asks him if he does not find it sweet and pure water. The parishioner, having answered that it was, is taken to the source, and finds that what had so refreshed him flowed from between the jaws of a dead dog. "Let this teach thee," said the priest, "that the very best doctrine may take its rise in a very impure and disgustful spring, and that excellent morals may be taught by a man who has no morals at all." It is easy enough to see the fallacy here. Had the man known beforehand from what a carrion fountain-head the stream issued, he could not have drunk of it without loathing. Had the priest merely bidden him to *look* at the stream and see how beautiful it was, instead of tasting it, it would have been quite another matter. And this is precisely the difference between what appeals to our æsthetic or to our moral sense, between what is judged of by the taste or by the conscience.

It is when the sentimentalist turns preacher of morals that we investigate his character, and are justified in so doing. He may express as many and as delicate shades of feeling as he likes, — for this the sensibility of his organization perfectly fits him and no other person could do it so well, — but the moment he undertakes to establish his feeling as a rule of conduct, we ask at once how far are his own life and deed in accordance with what he preaches? For every man feels instinctively that all the beautiful sentiments in the world weigh less than a single lovely action; and that while tenderness of feeling and susceptibility to generous emotions are accidents of temperament, goodness is an achievement of the will and a quality of the life. Fine words, says our homely old proverb, butter no parsnips; and if the question be how to render those vegetables palatable, an ounce of butter would be worth more than all the orations of Cicero. The only conclusive evidence of a man's sincerity is that he give *himself* for a principle. Words, money, all things else, are comparatively easy to give away; but when a man makes a gift of his daily life and practice, it is plain that the truth, whatever it may be, has taken possession of him. From that sincerity his words gain the force and pertinency of deeds, and his money is no longer the pale drudge 'twixt man and man, but, by a beautiful magic, what erewhile bore the image and superscription of Cæsar seems now to bear the image and superscription of God. It is thus that there is a genius for goodness, for magnanimity, for self-

sacrifice, as well as for creative art; and it is thus that by a more refined sort of Platonism the Infinite Beauty dwells in and shapes to its own likeness the soul which gives it body and individuality. But when Moore charges genius with being an impostor, the confusion of his ideas is pitiable. There is nothing so true, so sincere, so downright and forthright, as genius. It is always truer than the man himself is, greater than he. If Shakespeare the man had been as marvellous a creature as the genius that wrote his plays, that genius so comprehensive in its intelligence, so wise even in its play that its clowns are moralists and philosophers, so penetrative that a single one of its phrases reveals to us the secret of our own character, would his contemporaries have left us so wholly without record of him as they have done, distinguishing him in no wise from his fellow-players?

Rousseau, no doubt, was weak, nay, more than that, was sometimes despicable, but yet is not fairly to be reckoned among the herd of sentimentalists. It is shocking that a man whose preaching made it fashionable for women of rank to nurse their children should have sent his own, as soon as born, to the foundling hospital, still more shocking that, in a note to his *Discours sur l'Inégalité*, he should speak of this crime as one of the consequences of our social system. But for all that there was a faith and an ardor of conviction in him that distinguish him from most of the writers of his time. Nor were his practice and his preaching always inconsistent. He contrived to pay regularly, what-

ever his own circumstances were, a pension of one hundred *livres* a year to a maternal aunt who had been kind to him in childhood. Nor was his asceticism a sham. He might have turned his gift into laced coats and *châteaux* as easily as Voltaire, had he not held it too sacred to be bartered away in any such losing exchange.

But what is worthy of especial remark is this, — that in nearly all that he wrote his leading object was the good of his kind, and that, through all the vicissitudes of a life which illness, sensibility of temperament, and the approaches of insanity rendered wretched, — the associate of infidels, the foundling child, as it were, of an age without belief, least of all with any belief in itself, — he professed and evidently felt deeply a faith in the goodness both of man and of God. There is no such thing as scoffing in his writings. On the other hand, there is no stereotyped morality. He does not ignore the existence of scepticism; he recognizes its existence in his own nature, meets it frankly face to face, and makes it confess that there are things in the teaching of Christ that are deeper than its doubt. The influence of his early education at Geneva is apparent here. An intellect so acute as his, trained in the school of Calvin in a republic where theological discussion was as much the amusement of the people as the opera was at Paris, could not fail to be a good logician. He had the fortitude to follow his logic wherever it led him. If the very impressibility of character which quickened his perception of the beauties of

nature, and made him alive to the charm of music and musical expression, prevented him from being in the highest sense an original writer, and if his ideas were mostly suggested to him by books, yet the clearness, consecutiveness, and eloquence with which he stated and enforced them made them his own. There was at least that original fire in him which could fuse them and run them in a novel mould. His power lay in this very ability of manipulating the thoughts of others. Fond of paradox he doubtless was, but he had a way of putting things that arrested attention and excited thought.

It was, perhaps, this very sensibility to the surrounding atmosphere of feeling and speculation, which made Rousseau more directly influential on contemporary thought (or perhaps we should say sentiment) than any writer of his time. And this is rarely consistent with enduring greatness in literature. It forces us to remember, against our will, the oratorical character of his works. They were all pleas, and he a great advocate, with Europe in the jury-box. Enthusiasm begets enthusiasm, eloquence produces conviction for the moment, but it is only by truth to nature and the everlasting intuitions of mankind that those abiding influences are won that enlarge from generation to generation. Rousseau was in many respects — as great pleaders always are — a man of the day, who must needs become a mere name to posterity, yet he could not but have had in him some not inconsiderable share of that principle by which man eternizes himself.

For it is only to such that the night cometh not in which no man shall work, and he is still operative both in politics and literature by the principles he formulated or the emotions to which he gave a voice so piercing and so sympathetic.

In judging Rousseau, it would be unfair not to take note of the malarious atmosphere in which he grew up. The constitution of his mind was thus early infected with a feverish taint that made him shiveringly sensitive to a temperature which hardier natures found bracing. To him this rough world was but too literally a rack. Good-humored Mother Nature commonly imbeds the nerves of her children in a padding of self-conceit that serves as a buffer against the ordinary shocks to which even a life of routine is liable, and it would seem at first sight as if Rousseau had been better cared for than usual in this regard. But as his self-conceit was enormous, so was the reaction from it proportionate, and the fretting suspiciousness of temper, sure mark of an unsound mind, which rendered him incapable of intimate friendship, while passionately longing for it, became inevitably, when turned inward, a tormenting self-distrust. To dwell in unrealities is the doom of the sentimentalist; but it should not be forgotten that the same fitful intensity of emotion which makes them real as the means of elation, gives them substance also for torture. Too irritably jealous to endure the rude society of men, he steeped his senses in the enervating incense that women are only too ready to burn. If their friendship be a safeguard to

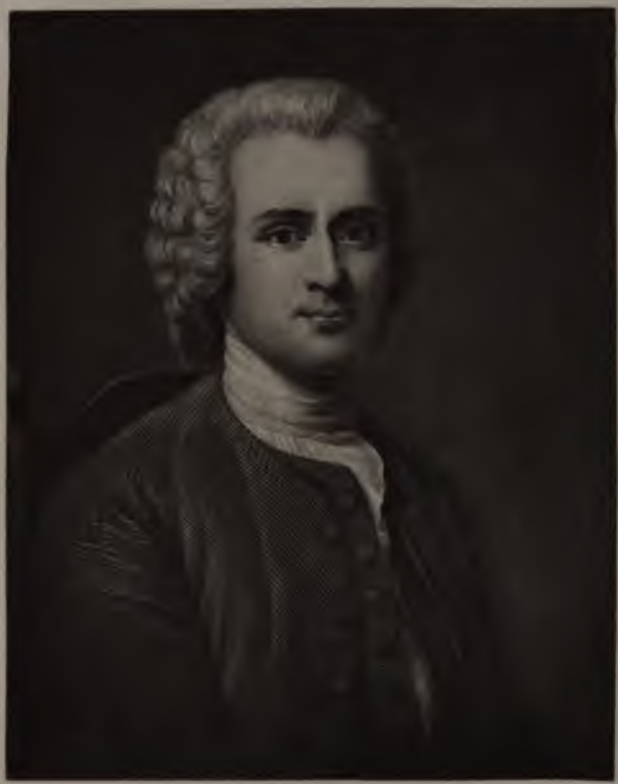
the other sex, their homage is fatal to all but the strongest, and Rousseau was weak both by inheritance and early training. His father was one of those feeble creatures for whom a fine phrase could always satisfactorily fill the void that non-performance leaves behind it. If he neglected duty, he made up for it by that cultivation of the finer sentiments of our common nature which waters flowers of speech with the brineless tears of a flabby remorse, without one fibre of resolve in it, and which impoverishes the character in proportion as it enriches the vocabulary. He was a very Apicius in that digestible kind of woe which makes no man leaner, and had a favorite receipt for cooking you up a sorrow *à la douleur inassouvie* that had just enough delicious sharpness in it to bring tears into the eyes by tickling the palate. "When he said to me, 'Jean Jacques, let us speak of thy mother,' I said to him, 'Well, father, we are going to weep, then,' and this word alone drew tears from him. 'Ah!' said he, groaning, 'give her back to me, console me for her, fill the void she has left in my soul!'" Alas! in such cases, the void she leaves is only that she found. The grief that seeks any other than its own society will erelong want an object. This admirable parent allowed his son to become an outcast at sixteen, without any attempt to reclaim him, in order to enjoy unmolested a petty inheritance to which the boy was entitled in right of his mother. "This conduct," Rousseau tells us, "of a father whose tenderness and virtue were so well known to me, caused me to make

reflections on myself which have not a little contributed to make my heart sound. I drew from it this great maxim of morals, the only one perhaps serviceable in practice, to avoid situations which put our duties in opposition to our interest, and which show us our own advantage in the wrong of another, sure that in such situations, *however sincere may be one's love of virtue*, it sooner or later grows weak without our perceiving it, *and that we become unjust and wicked in action without having ceased to be just and good in soul.*"

This maxim may do for that "fugitive and cloistered virtue, unexercised and unbreathed, that never sallies out and seeks its adversary," which Milton could not praise, — that is, for a manhood whose distinction it is not to be manly, — but it is chiefly worth notice as being the characteristic doctrine of sentimentalism. This disjoining of deed from will, of practice from theory, is to put asunder what God has joined by an indissoluble sacrament. The soul must be tainted before the action become corrupt; and there is no self-delusion more fatal than that which makes the conscience dreamy with the anodyne of lofty sentiments, while the life is grovelling and sensual, — witness Coleridge. In his case we feel something like disgust. But where, as in his son Hartley, there is hereditary infirmity, where the man sees the principle that might rescue him slip from the clutch of a nerveless will, like a rope through the fingers of a drowning man, and the confession of faith is the moan of despair, there is room for no harsher feeling than pity. Rousseau

showed through life a singular proneness for being convinced by his own eloquence; he was always his own first convert; and this reconciles his power as a writer with his weakness as a man. He and all like him mistake emotion for conviction, velleity for resolve, the brief eddy of sentiment for the mid-current of ever-gathering faith in duty that draws to itself all the affluents of conscience and will, and gives continuity of purpose to life. They are like men who love the stimulus of being under conviction, as it is called, who, forever getting religion, never get capital enough to retire upon and to spend for their own need and the common service.

The sentimentalist is the spiritual hypochondriac, with whom fancies become facts, while facts are a discomfort because they will not be evaporated into fancy. In his eyes, Theory is too fine a dame to confess even a country-cousinship with coarse-handed Practice, whose homely ways would disconcert her artificial world. The very susceptibility that makes him quick to feel, makes him also incapable of deep and durable feeling. He loves to think he suffers, and keeps a pet sorrow, a blue-devil familiar, that goes with him everywhere, like Paracelsus's black dog. He takes good care, however, that it shall not be the true sulphurous article that sometimes takes a fancy to fly away with his conjurer. René says: "In my madness I had gone so far as even to wish I might experience a misfortune, so that my suffering might at least have a real object." But no; selfishness is only active egotism, and there is nothing and nobody,



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with a single exception, which this sort of creature will not sacrifice, rather than give any other than an imaginary pang to his idol. Vicarious pain he is not unwilling to endure, nay, will even commit suicide by proxy, like the German poet who let his wife kill herself to give him a sensation. Had young Jerusalem been anything like Goethe's portrait of him in Werther, he would have taken very good care not to blow out the brains which he would have thought only too precious. Real sorrows are uncomfortable things, but purely æsthetic ones are by no means unpleasant, and I have always fancied the handsome young Wolfgang writing those distracted letters to Auguste Stolberg with a looking-glass in front of him to give back an image of his desolation, and finding it rather pleasant than otherwise to shed the tear of sympathy with self that would seem so bitter to his fair correspondent. The tears that have real salt in them will keep; they are the difficult, manly tears that are shed in secret; but the pathos soon evaporates from that fresh-water with which a man can bedew a dead donkey in public, while his wife is having a good cry over his neglect of her at home. We do not think the worse of Goethe for hypothetically desolating himself in the fashion aforesaid, for with many constitutions it is as purely natural a crisis as dentition, which the stronger worry through, and turn out very sensible, agreeable fellows. But where there is an arrest of development, and the heartbreak of the patient is audibly prolonged through life, we have

a spectacle which the toughest heart would wish to get as far away from as possible.

I would not be supposed to overlook the distinction, too often lost sight of, between sentimentalism and sentiment, the latter being a very excellent thing in its way, as genuine things are apt to be. Sentiment is intellectualized emotion, emotion precipitated, as it were, in pretty crystals by the fancy. This is the delightful staple of the poets of social life like Horace and Béranger, or Thackeray, when he too rarely played with verse. It puts into words for us that decorous average of feeling to the expression of which society can consent without danger of being indiscreetly moved. It is excellent for people who are willing to save their souls alive to any extent that shall not be discomposing. It is even satisfying till some deeper experience has given us a hunger which what we so glibly call "the world" cannot sate, just as a water-ice is nourishment enough to a man who has had his dinner. It is the sufficing lyrical interpreter of those lighter hours that should make part of every healthy man's day, and is noxious only when it palls men's appetite for the truly profound poetry which is very passion of very soul sobered by afterthought and embodied in eternal types by imagination. True sentiment is emotion ripened by a slow ferment of the mind and qualified to an agreeable temperance by that taste which is the conscience of polite society. But the sentimentalist always insists on taking his emotion neat, and, as his sense gradually deadens to the

stimulus, increases his dose till he ends in a kind of moral deliquium. At first the debaucher, he becomes at last the victim of his sensations.

Among the ancients we find little or no trace of sentimentalism, though Euripides and still more Ovid give hints of it. Their masculine mood both of body and mind left no room for it, and hence the bracing quality of their literature compared with that of recent times, its tonic property, that seems almost too astringent to palates relaxed by a daintier diet. The first great example of the degenerate modern tendency was Petrarch, who may be said to have given it impulse and direction. A more perfect specimen of the type has not since appeared. An intellectual voluptuary, a moral *dilettante*, the first instance of that character, since too common, the gentleman in search of a sensation, seeking a solitude at Vaucluse because it made him more likely to be in demand at Avignon, praising philosophic poverty with a sharp eye to the next rich benefice in the gift of his patron, commending a good life but careful first of a good living, happy only in seclusion but making a dangerous journey to enjoy the theatrical show of a coronation in the Capitol, cherishing a fruitless passion which broke his heart three or four times a year and yet could not make an end of him till he had reached the ripe age of seventy and survived his mistress a quarter of a century, — surely a more exquisite perfection of inconsistency would be hard to find.

When Petrarch returned from his journey into

the North of Europe in 1332, he balanced the books of his unrequited passion, and, finding that he had now been in love seven years, thought the time had at last come to call deliberately on Death. Had Death taken him at his word, he would have protested that he was only in fun. For we find him always taking good care of an excellent constitution, avoiding the plague with commendable assiduity, and in the very year when he declares it absolutely essential to his peace of mind to die for good and all, taking refuge in the fortress of Capranica, from a wholesome dread of having his throat cut by robbers. There is such a difference between dying in a sonnet with a cambric handkerchief at one's eyes, and the prosaic reality of demise certified in the parish register! Practically it is inconvenient to be dead. Among other things, it puts an end to the manufacture of sonnets. But there seems to have been an excellent understanding between Petrarch and Death, for he was brought to that grisly monarch's door so often, that, otherwise, nothing short of a miracle or the nine lives of that animal whom love also makes lyrical could have saved him. "I consent," he cries, "to live and die in Africa among its serpents, upon Caucasus, or Atlas, if, while I live, to breathe a pure air, and after my death a little corner of earth where to bestow my body, may be allowed me. This is all I ask, but this I cannot obtain. Doomed always to wander, and to be a stranger everywhere, O Fortune, Fortune, fix me at last to some one spot! I do not covet thy favors.

Let me enjoy a tranquil poverty, let me pass in this retreat the few days that remain to me!" The pathetic stop of Petrarch's poetical organ was one he could pull out at pleasure, — and indeed we soon learn to distrust literary tears, as the cheap subterfuge for want of real feeling with natures of this quality. Solitude with him was but the pseudonyme of notoriety. Poverty was the archdeaconry of Parma, with other ecclesiastical pickings. During his retreat at Vaucluse, in the very height of that divine sonneteering love of Laura, of that sensitive purity which called Avignon Babylon, and rebuked the sinfulness of Clement, he was himself begetting that kind of children which we spell with a *b*. We believe that, if Messer Francesco had been present when the woman was taken in adultery, he would have flung the first stone without the slightest feeling of inconsistency, nay, with a sublime sense of virtue. The truth is, that it made very little difference to him what sort of proper sentiment he expressed, provided he could do it elegantly and with unction. And with supreme elegance he knew how to express it, thereby conferring an incalculable benefit on the literature of Italy and of Europe.

Would any one feel the difference between his faint abstractions and the Platonism of a powerful nature fitted alike for the withdrawal of ideal contemplation and for breasting the storms of life, — would any one know how wide a depth divides a noble friendship based on sympathy of pursuit and aspiration, on that mutual help which souls

capable of self-sustainment are the readiest to give or to take, and a simulated passion, true neither to the spiritual nor the sensual part of man, — let him compare the sonnets of Petrarch with those which Michel Angelo addressed to Vittoria Colonna. In them the airiest pinnacles of sentiment and speculation are buttressed with solid masonwork of thought, of an actual, not fancied experience, and the depth of feeling is measured by the sobriety and reserve of expression, while in Petrarch's all ingenuousness is frittered away into ingenuity. Both are cold, but the coldness of the one is self-restraint, while the other chills with pretence of warmth. In Michel Angelo's, you feel the great architect; in Petrarch's the artist who can best realize his conception in the limits of a cherry-stone. And yet this man influenced literature longer and more widely than almost any other in modern times. So great is the charm of elegance, so unreal is the larger part of what is written!

Certainly I do not mean to say that a work of art should be looked at by the light of the artist's biography, or measured by our standard of his character. Nor do I reckon what was genuine in Petrarch — his love of letters, his refinement, his skill in the superficial graces of language, that rhetorical art by which the music of words supplants their meaning, and the verse moulds the thought instead of being plastic to it — after any such fashion. I have no ambition for that character of *valet de chambre* which is said to disenchant

the most heroic figures into mere every-day personages, for it implies a mean soul no less than a servile condition. But we have a right to demand a certain amount of reality, however small, in the emotion of a man who makes it his business to endeavor at exciting our own. We have a privilege of nature to shiver before a painted flame, how cunningly soever the colors be laid on. Yet our love of minute biographical detail, our desire to make ourselves spies upon the men of the past, seems so much of an instinct in us, that we must look for the spring of it in human nature, and that somewhat deeper than mere curiosity or love of gossip. It should seem to arise from what must be considered on the whole a creditable feeling, namely, that we value character more than any amount of talent, — the skill to *be* something, above that of doing anything but the best of its kind. The highest creative genius, and that only, is privileged from arrest by this personality, for there the thing produced is altogether disengaged from the producer. But in natures incapable of this escape from themselves, the author is inevitably mixed with his work, and we have a feeling that the amount of his sterling character is the security for the notes he issues. Especially we feel so when truth to self, which is always self-forgetful, and not truth to nature, makes an essential part of the value of what is offered us; as where a man undertakes to narrate personal experience or to enforce a dogma. This is particularly true as respects sentimentalists, because of their intrusive self-con-

sciousness; for there is no more universal characteristic of human nature than the instinct of men to apologize to themselves for themselves, and to justify personal failings by generalizing them into universal laws. A man would be the keenest devil's advocate against himself, were it not that he has always taken a retaining fee for the defence; for I think that the indirect and mostly unconscious pleas in abatement which we read between the lines in the works of many authors are oftener written to set themselves right in their own eyes than in those of the world. And in the real life of the sentimentalist it is the same. He is under the wretched necessity of keeping up, at least in public, the character he has assumed, till he at last reaches that last shift of bankrupt self-respect, to play the hypocrite with himself. Lamartine, after passing round the hat in Europe and America, takes to his bed from wounded pride when the French Senate votes him a subsidy, and sheds tears of humiliation. Ideally, he resents it; in practical coin, he will accept the shame without a wry face, he will "impeticos the gratillity."

George Sand, speaking of Rousseau's "Confessions," says that an autobiographer always makes himself the hero of his own novel, and cannot help idealizing, even if he would. But the weak point of all sentimentalists is that they always have been, and always continue under every conceivable circumstance to be, their own ideals, whether they are writing their own lives or no. Rousseau opens his book with the statement: "I am not made like any

of those I have seen; I venture to believe myself unlike any that exists. If I am not worth more, at least I am different." O exquisite cunning of self-flattery! It is this very imagined difference that makes us worth more in our own foolish sight. For while all men are apt to think, or to persuade themselves that they think, all other men their accomplices in vice or weakness, they are not difficult of belief that they are singular in any quality or talent on which they hug themselves. More than this; people who are truly original are the last to find it out, for the moment we become conscious of a virtue, it has left us or is getting ready to go. Originality does not consist in a fidgety assertion of selfhood, but in the faculty of getting rid of it altogether, that the truer genius of the man, which commerces with universal nature and with other souls through a common sympathy with that, may take all his powers wholly to itself, — and the truly original man could no more be jealous of his peculiar gift, than the grass could take credit to itself for being green. What is the reason that all children are geniuses, (though they contrive so soon to outgrow that dangerous quality,) except that they never cross-examine themselves on the subject? The moment that process begins, their speech loses its gift of unexpectedness, and they become as tediously impertiment as the rest of us.

If there never was any one like him, if he constituted a genus in himself, to what end write confessions in which no other human being could ever be in a condition to take the least possible interest?

All men are interested in Montaigne in proportion as all men find more of themselves in him, and all men see but one image in the glass which the greatest of poets holds up to nature, an image which at once startles and charms them with its familiarity. Fabulists always endow their animals with the passions and desires of men. But if an ox could dictate his confessions, what glimmer of understanding should we find in those bovine confidences, unless on some theory of preëxistence, some blank misgiving of a creature moving about in worlds not realized? The truth is, that we recognize the common humanity of Rousseau in the very weakness that betrayed him into this conceit of himself; we find he is just like the rest of us in this very assumption of essential difference, for among all animals man is the only one who tries to pass for more than he is, and so involves himself in the condemnation of seeming less.

Benvenuto Cellini was right in his *dictum* about autobiographies; and so was Dr. Kitchener, in his about hares. First catch your perfectly sincere and unconscious man. He is even more uncommon than a genius of the first order. Most men dress themselves for their autobiographies, as Machiavelli used to do for reading the classics, in their best clothes; they receive us, as it were, in a parlor chilling and awkward from its unfamiliarity with man, and keep us carefully away from the kitchen-chimney-corner, where they would feel at home, and would not look on a lapse into nature as the unpardonable sin. But what do we want of

a hospitality that makes strangers of us, or of confidences that keep us at arm's-length? Better the tavern and the newspaper; for in the one we can grumble, and from the other learn more of our neighbors than we care to know. John Smith's autobiography is commonly John Smith's design for an equestrian statue of himself, — very fine, certainly, and as much like him as like Marcus Aurelius. Saint Augustine, kneeling to confess, has an eye to the picturesque, and does it *in pontificalibus*, resolved that Domina Grundy shall think all the better of him. Rousseau cries, "I will bare my heart to you!" and, throwing open his waistcoat, makes us the confidants of his dirty linen. Montaigne, indeed, reports of himself with the impartiality of a naturalist, and Boswell, in his letters to Temple, shows a maudlin irretentiveness; but is not old Samuel Pepys, after all, the only man who spoke to himself of himself with perfect simplicity, frankness, and unconsciousness? a creature unique as the dodo, a solitary specimen, to show that it was possible for Nature to indulge in so odd a whimsey! An autobiography is good for nothing, unless the author tell us in it precisely what he meant not to tell. A man who can say what he thinks of another to his face is a disagreeable rarity; but one who could look his own Ego straight in the eye, and pronounce unbiased judgment, were worthy of Sir Thomas Browne's Museum. Had Cheiron written his autobiography, the consciousness of his equine crupper would have ridden him like a nightmare; should a mermaid write

hers, she would sink the fish's tail, nor allow it to be put into the scales, in weighing her character. The mermaid, in truth, is the emblem of those who strive to see themselves; her mirror is too small to reflect anything more than the *mulier formosa supernè*.

But it would be sheer waste of time to hunt Rousseau through all his doublings of inconsistency, and run him to earth in every new paradox. His first two books attacked, one of them literature, and the other society. But this did not prevent him from being diligent with his pen, nor from availing himself of his credit with persons who enjoyed all the advantages of that inequality whose evils he had so pointedly exposed. Indeed, it is curious how little practical communism there has been, how few professors it has had who would not have gained by a general dividend. It is perhaps no frantic effort of generosity in a philosopher with ten crowns in his pocket when he offers to make common stock with a neighbor who has ten thousand of yearly income, nor is it an uncommon thing to see such theories knocked clean out of a man's head by the descent of a thumping legacy. But, consistent or not, Rousseau remains permanently interesting as the highest and most perfect type of the sentimentalist of genius. His was perhaps the acutest mind that was ever mated with an organization so diseased,[1] the brain most far-reaching in speculation that ever kept itself steady and worked out its problems amid such disordered

[1] Perhaps we should except Newton.

tumult of the nerves. His letter to the Archbishop of Paris, admirable for its lucid power and soberness of tone, and his *Rousseau juge de Jean Jacques*, which no man can read and believe him to have been sane, show him to us in his strength and weakness, and give us a more charitable, let us hope therefore a truer, notion of him than his own apology for himself. That he was a man of genius appears unmistakably in his impressibility by the deeper meaning of the epoch in which he lived. Before an eruption, clouds steeped through and through with electric life gather over the crater, as if in sympathy and expectation. As the mountain heaves and cracks, these vapory masses are seamed with fire, as if they felt and answered the dumb agony that is struggling for utterance below. Just such flashes of eager sympathetic fire break continually from the cloudy volumes of Rousseau, the result at once and the warning of that convulsion of which Paris was to be the crater and all Europe to feel the spasm. There are symptoms enough elsewhere of that want of faith in the existing order which made the Revolution inevitable, — even so shallow an observer as Horace Walpole could forebode it so early as 1765, — but Rousseau more than all others is the unconscious expression of the groping after something radically new, the instinct for a change that should be organic and pervade every fibre of the social and political body. Freedom of thought owes far more to the jester Voltaire, who also had his solid kernel of earnest, than to the sombre Genevese, whose earnestness

is of the deadly kind. Yet, for good or evil, the latter was the foster-father of modern democracy, and without him our Declaration of Independence would have wanted some of those sentences in which the immemorial longings of the poor and the dreams of solitary enthusiasts were at last affirmed as axioms in the manifesto of a nation, so that all the world might hear.

Though Rousseau, like many other fanatics, had a remarkable vein of common sense in him, (witness his remarks on duelling, on landscape-gardening, on French poetry, and much of his thought on education,) we cannot trace many practical results to his teaching, least of all in politics. For the great difficulty with his system, if system it may be called, is, that, while it professes to follow nature, it not only assumes as a starting-point that the individual man may be made over again, but proceeds to the conclusion that man himself, that human nature, must be made over again, and governments remodelled on a purely theoretic basis. But when something like an experiment in this direction was made in 1789, not only did it fail as regarded man in general, but even as regards the particular variety of man that inhabited France. The Revolution accomplished many changes, and beneficent ones, yet it left France peopled, not by a new race without traditions, but by Frenchmen. Still, there must have been a wonderful force in the words of a man who, above all others, had the secret of making abstractions glow with his own fervor; and his ideas, dispersed now in the atmosphere of

thought, have influenced, perhaps still continue to influence, speculative minds, which prefer swift and sure generalization to hesitating and doubtful experience.

Rousseau has, in one respect, been utterly misrepresented and misunderstood. Even Châteaubriand most unfilially classes him and Voltaire together. It appears to me that the inmost core of his being was religious. Had he remained in the Catholic Church, he might have been a saint. Had he come earlier, he might have founded an order. His was precisely the nature on which religious enthusiasm takes the strongest hold, a temperament which finds sensuous delight in spiritual things, and satisfies its craving for excitement with celestial debauch. He had not the iron temper of a great reformer and organizer like Knox, who, true Scotchman that he was, found a way to weld this world and the other together in a cast-iron creed; but he had as much as any man ever had that gift of a great preacher to make the oratorical fervor which persuades himself while it lasts into the abiding conviction of his hearers. That very persuasion of his, that the soul could remain pure while the life was corrupt, is not unexampled among men who have left holier names than he. His "Confessions," also, would assign him to that class with whom the religious sentiment is strong and the moral nature weak. They are apt to believe that they may, as special pleaders say, confess and avoid. Hawthorne has admirably illustrated this in the penance of Mr. Dimmesdale.

With all the soil that is upon Rousseau, I cannot help looking on him as one capable beyond any in his generation of being divinely possessed; and if it happened otherwise, when we remember the much that hindered and the little that helped in a life and time like his, we shall be much readier to pity than to condemn. It was his very fitness for being something better that makes him able to shock us so with what in too many respects he unhappily was. Less gifted, he had been less hardly judged. More than any other of the sentimentalists, except possibly Sterne, he had in him a staple of sincerity. Compared with Châteaubriand, he is honesty, compared with Lamartine, he is manliness, itself. His nearest congener in our own tongue is Cowper.

In the whole school there is a sickly taint. The strongest mark which Rousseau has left upon literature is a sensibility to the picturesque in Nature, not with Nature as a strengthener and consoler, a wholesome tonic for a mind ill at ease with itself, but with Nature as a kind of feminine echo to the mood, flattering it with sympathy rather than correcting it with rebuke or lifting it away from its unmanly depression, as in the wholesomer fellow-feeling of Wordsworth. They seek in her an accessory, and not a reproof. It is less a sympathy with Nature than a sympathy with ourselves as we compel her to reflect us. It is solitude, Nature for her estrangement from man, not for her companionship with him; it is desolation and ruin, Nature as she has triumphed over man, with which this

order of mind seeks communion and in which it finds solace. It is with the hostile and destructive power of matter, and not with the spirit of life and renewal that dwells in it, that they ally themselves. And in human character it is the same. St. Preux, René, Werther, Manfred, Quasimodo, they are all anomalies, distortions, ruins, — so much easier is it to caricature life from our own sickly conception of it than to paint it in its noble simplicity; so much cheaper is unreality than truth.

Every man is conscious that he leads two lives, the one trivial and ordinary, the other sacred and recluse; one which he carries to society and the dinner-table, the other in which his youth and aspiration survive for him, and which is a confidence between himself and God. Both may be equally sincere, and there need be no contradiction between them, any more than in a healthy man between soul and body. If the higher life be real and earnest, its result, whether in literature or affairs, will be real and earnest too. But no man can produce great things who is not thoroughly sincere in dealing with himself, who would not exchange the finest show for the poorest reality, who does not so love his work that he is not only glad to give himself for it, but finds rather a gain than a sacrifice in the surrender. The sentimentalist does not think of what he does so much as of what the world will think of what he does. He translates should into would, looks upon the spheres of duty and beauty as alien to each other, and can never learn how life rounds itself to a noble completeness

between these two opposite but mutually sustaining poles of what we long for and what we must.

Did Rousseau, then, lead a life of this quality? Perhaps, when we consider the contrast which every man who looks backward must feel between the life he planned and the life which circumstance within him and without him has made for him, we should rather ask, Was this the life he meant to lead? Perhaps, when we take into account his faculty of self-deception, — it may be no greater than our own, — we should ask, Was this the life he believed he led? Have we any right to judge this man after our blunt English fashion, and condemn him, as we are wont to do, on the finding of a jury of average householders? Is French reality precisely our reality? Could we tolerate tragedy in rhymed alexandrines, instead of blank verse? The whole life of Rousseau is pitched on this heroic key, and for the most trivial occasion he must be ready with the sublime sentiments that are supposed to suit him rather than it. It is one of the most curious features of the sentimental ailment, that, while it shuns the contact of men, it courts publicity. In proportion as solitude and communion with self lead the sentimentalist to exaggerate the importance of his own personality, he comes to think that the least event connected with it is of consequence to his fellow-men. If he change his shirt, he would have mankind aware of it. Victor Hugo, the greatest living representative of the class, considers it necessary to let the world know by letter from time to time his opinions on every

conceivable subject about which it is not asked nor is of the least value unless we concede to him an immediate inspiration. We men of colder blood, in whom self-consciousness takes the form of pride, and who have deified *mauvaise honte* as if our defect were our virtue, find it especially hard to understand that artistic impulse of more southern races to *pose* themselves properly on every occasion, and not even to die without some tribute of deference to the taste of the world they are leaving. Was not even mighty Cæsar's last thought of his drapery? Let us not condemn Rousseau for what seems to us the indecent exposure of himself in his "Confessions."

Those who allow an oratorical and purely conventional side disconnected with our private understanding of the facts and with life, in which everything has a wholly parliamentary sense where truth is made subservient to the momentary exigencies of eloquence, should be charitable to Rousseau. While we encourage a distinction which establishes two kinds of truth, one for the world and another for the conscience, while we take pleasure in a kind of speech that has no relation to the real thought of speaker or hearer, but to the rostrum only, we must not be hasty to condemn a sentimentalism which we do our best to foster. We listen in public with the gravity of augurs to what we smile at when we meet a brother adept. France is the native land of eulogy, of truth padded out to the size and shape demanded by *comme-il-faut*. The French Academy has, perhaps, done more harm by

the vogue it has given to this style, than it has done good by its literary purism; for the best purity of a language depends on the limpidity of its source in veracity of thought. Rousseau was in many respects a typical Frenchman, and it is not to be wondered at if he too often fell in with the fashion of saying what was expected of him, and what he thought due to the situation, rather than what would have been true to his inmost consciousness. Perhaps we should allow something to the influence of a Calvinistic training, which certainly helps men who have the least natural tendency towards it to set faith above works, and to persuade themselves of the efficacy of an inward grace to offset an outward and visible defection from it; perhaps something also to the Jewish descent which his name seems to imply.

As the sentimentalist always takes a fanciful, sometimes an unreal, life for an ideal one, it would be too much to say that Rousseau was a man of earnest convictions. But he was a man of fitfully intense ones, as suited so mobile a temperament, and his writings, more than those of any other of his tribe, carry with them that persuasion that was in him while he wrote. In them at least he is as consistent as a man who admits new ideas can ever be. The children of his brain he never abandoned, but clung to them with paternal fidelity. Intellectually he was true and fearless; constitutionally, timid, contradictory, and weak; but never, if I understand him rightly, false. He was a little too credulous of sonorous sentiment, but he was never

like Châteaubriand or Lamartine, the mere lackey of fine phrases. If, as some fanciful physiologists have assumed, there be a masculine and feminine lobe of the brain, it should seem that in men of sentimental turn the masculine half fell in love with and made an idol of the other, obeying and admiring all the pretty whims of this *folle du logis*. In Rousseau the mistress had some noble elements of character, and less taint of the *demi-monde* than is visible in more recent cases of the same illicit relation.

A GREAT PUBLIC CHARACTER[1]

1867

It is the misfortune of American biography that it must needs be more or less provincial, and that, contrary to what might have been predicted, this quality in it predominates in proportion as the country grows larger. Wanting any great and acknowledged centre of national life and thought, our expansion has hitherto been rather aggregation than growth; reputations must be hammered out thin to cover so wide a surface, and the substance of most hardly holds out to the boundaries of a single State. Our very history wants unity, and down to the Revolution the attention is wearied and confused by having to divide itself among thirteen parallel threads, instead of being concentred on a single clue. A sense of remoteness and seclusion comes over us as we read, and we cannot help asking ourselves, "Were *not* these things done in a corner?" Notoriety may be achieved in a narrow sphere, but fame demands for its evidence a more distant and prolonged reverberation. To the world at large we were but a short column of figures in the corner of a blue-book, New England exporting so much salt-fish, timber, and Medford rum, Vir-

[1] The *Life of Josiah Quincy*, by his son.

ginia so many hogsheads of tobacco, and buying with the proceeds a certain amount of English manufactures. The story of our early colonization had a certain moral interest, to be sure, but was altogether inferior in picturesque fascination to that of Mexico or Peru. The lives of our worthies, like that of our nation, are bare of those foregone and far-reaching associations with names, the divining-rods of fancy, which the soldiers and civilians of the Old World get for nothing by the mere accident of birth. Their historians and biographers have succeeded to the good-will, as well as to the long-established stand, of the shop of glory. Time is, after all, the greatest of poets, and the sons of Memory stand a better chance of being the heirs of Fame. The philosophic poet may find a proud solace in saying,

> "Avia Pieridum peragro loca nullius ante
> Trita solo;"

but all the while he has the splendid centuries of Greece and Rome behind him, and can begin his poem with invoking a goddess from whom legend derived the planter of his race. His eyes looked out on a landscape saturated with glorious recollections; he had seen Cæsar, and heard Cicero. But who shall conjure with Saugus or Cato Four Corners, — with Israel Putnam or Return Jonathan Meigs? We have been transplanted, and for us the long hierarchical succession of history is broken. The Past has not laid its venerable hands upon us in consecration, conveying to us that mysterious influence whose force is in its conti-

nuity. We are to Europe as the Church of England to her of Rome. The latter old lady may be the Scarlet Woman, or the Beast with ten horns, if you will, but hers are all the heirlooms, hers that vast spiritual estate of tradition, nowhere yet everywhere, whose revenues are none the less fruitful for being levied on the imagination. We may claim that England's history is also ours, but it is a *de jure*, and not a *de facto* property that we have in it, — something that may be proved indeed, yet is a merely intellectual satisfaction, and does not savor of the realty. Have we not seen the mockery crown and sceptre of the exiled Stuarts in St. Peter's? the medal struck so lately as 1784 with its legend, HEN IX MAG BRIT ET HIB REX, whose contractions but faintly typify the scantness of the fact?

As the novelist complains that our society wants that sharp contrast of character and costume which comes of caste, so in the narrative of our historians we miss what may be called background and perspective, as if the events and the actors in them failed of that cumulative interest which only a long historical entail can give. Relatively, the crusade of Sir William Pepperell was of more consequence than that of St. Louis, and yet forgive me, injured shade of the second American baronet, if I find the narrative of Joinville more interesting than your despatches to Governor Shirley. Relatively, the insurrection of that Daniel whose Irish patronymic Shea was euphonized into Shays, as a set-off for the debasing of French *chaise* into *shay*, was

more dangerous than that of Charles Edward; but for some reason or other (as vice sometimes has the advantage of virtue) the latter is more enticing to the imagination, and the least authentic relic of it in song or story has a relish denied to the painful industry of Minot. Our events seem to fall short of that colossal proportion which befits the monumental style. Look grave as we will, there is something ludicrous in Counsellor Keane's pig being the pivot of a revolution. We are of yesterday, and it is to no purpose that our political augurs divine from the flight of our eagles that to-morrow shall be ours, and flatter us with an all-hail hereafter. Things do really gain in greatness by being acted on a great and cosmopolitan stage, because there is inspiration in the thronged audience and the nearer match that puts men on their mettle. Webster was more largely endowed by nature than Fox, and Fisher Ames not much below Burke as a talker; but what a difference in the intellectual training, in the literary culture and associations, in the whole social outfit, of the men who were their antagonists and companions! It should seem that, if it be collision with other minds and with events that strikes or draws the fire from a man, then the quality of those might have something to do with the quality of the fire, — whether it shall be culinary or electric. We have never known the varied stimulus, the inexorable criticism, the many-sided opportunity of a great metropolis, the inspiring reinforcement of an undivided national consciousness. In everything but

trade we have missed the invigoration of foreign rivalry. We may prove that we are this and that and the other; our Fourth-of-July orators have proved it time and again; the census has proved it; but the Muses are women, and have no great fancy for statistics, though easily silenced by them. We are great, we are rich, we are all kinds of good things; but did it never occur to you that somehow we are not interesting, except as a phenomenon? It may safely be affirmed that for one cultivated man in this country who studies American history, there are fifty who study European, ancient or modern.

The division of the United States into so many wellnigh independent republics, each with official rewards in its gift great enough to excite and to satisfy a considerable ambition, makes fame a palpably provincial thing in America. We say *palpably*, because the larger part of contemporary fame is truly parochial everywhere; only we are apt to overlook the fact when we measure by kingdoms or empires instead of counties, and to fancy a stature for Palmerston or Persigny suitable to the size of the stage on which they act. It seems a much finer thing to be a Lord Chancellor in England than a Chief Justice in Massachusetts; yet the same abilities which carried the chance-transplanted Boston boy, Lyndhurst, to the woolsack, might, perhaps, had he remained in the land of his birth, have found no higher goal than the bench of the Supreme Court. Mr. Dickens laughed very fairly at the "remarkable men" of our small towns; but

England is full of just such little-greatness, with the difference that one is proclaimed in the "Bungtown Tocsin" and the other in the "Times." We must get a new phrase, and say that Mr. Brown was immortal at the latest dates, and Mr. Jones a great man when the steamer sailed. The small man in Europe is reflected to his contemporaries from a magnifying mirror, while even the great men in America can be imaged only in a diminishing one. If powers broaden with the breadth of opportunity, if Occasion be the mother of greatness and not its tool, the centralizing system of Europe should produce more eminent persons than our distributive one. Certain it is that the character grows larger in proportion to the size of the affairs with which it is habitually concerned, and that a mind of more than common stature acquires an habitual *stoop*, if forced to deal lifelong with little men and little things.

Even that German-silver kind of fame, Notoriety, can scarcely be had here at a cheaper rate than a murder done in broad daylight of a Sunday; and the only sure way of having one's name known to the utmost corners of our empire is by achieving a continental *dis*repute. With a metropolis planted in a crevice between Maryland and Virginia, and stunted because its roots vainly seek healthy nourishment in a soil long impoverished by slavery, a paulo-post future capital, the centre of nothing, without literature, art, or so much as commerce, — we have no recognized dispenser of national reputations like London or Paris. In a country richer in

humor, and among a people keener in the sense of it than any other, we cannot produce a national satire or caricature, because there is no butt visible to all parts of the country at once. How many men at this moment know the names, much more the history or personal appearance, of our cabinet ministers? But the joke of London or Paris tickles all the ribs of England or France, and the intellectual rushlight of those cities becomes a beacon, set upon such bushels, and multiplied by the many-faced provincial reflector behind it. Meanwhile New York and Boston wrangle about literary and social preëminence like two schoolboys, each claiming to have something (he knows not exactly what) vastly finer than the other at home. Let us hope that we shall by-and-by develop a rivalry like that of the Italian cities, and that the difficulty of fame beyond our own village may make us more content with doing than desirous of the name of it. For, after all, History herself is for the most part but the Muse of Little Peddlington, and Athens raised the heaviest crop of laurels yet recorded on a few acres of rock, without help from newspaper guano.

Till within a year or two we have been as distant and obscure to the eyes of Europe as Ecuador to our own. Every day brings us nearer, enables us to see the Old World more clearly, and by inevitable comparison to judge ourselves with some closer approach to our real value. This has its advantage so long as our culture is, as for a long time it must be, European; for we shall be little better

than apes and parrots till we are forced to measure our muscle with the trained and practised champions of that elder civilization. We have at length established our claim to the noblesse of the sword, the first step still of every nation that would make its entry into the best society of history. To maintain ourselves there, we must achieve an equality in the more exclusive circle of culture, and to that end must submit ourselves to the European standard of intellectual weights and measures. That we have made the hitherto biggest gun might excite apprehension (were there a dearth of iron), but can never exact respect. That our pianos and patent reapers have won medals does but confirm us in our mechanic and material measure of merit. We must contribute something more than mere contrivances for the saving of labor, which we have been only too ready to misapply in the domain of thought and the higher kinds of invention. In those Olympic games where nations contend for truly immortal wreaths, it may well be questioned whether a mowing-machine would stand much chance in the chariot-races, whether a piano, though made by a chevalier, could compete successfully for the prize of music.

We shall have to be content for a good while yet with our provincialism, and must strive to make the best of it. In it lies the germ of nationality, and that is, after all, the prime condition of all thorough-bred greatness of character. To this choicest fruit of a healthy life, well rooted in native soil, and drawing prosperous juices thence, nation

ality gives the keenest flavor. Mr. Lincoln was an original man, and in so far a great man; yet it was the Americanism of his every thought, word, and act which not only made his influence equally at home in East and West, but drew the eyes of the outside world, and was the pedestal that lifted him where he could be seen by them. Lincoln showed that native force may transcend local boundaries, but the growth of such nationality is hindered and hampered by our division into so many half-independent communities, each with its objects of county ambition, and its public men great to the borders of their district. In this way our standard of greatness is insensibly debased. To receive any national appointment, a man must have gone through precisely the worst training for it; he must have so far narrowed and belittled himself with State politics as to be acceptable at home. In this way a man may become chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, because he knows how to pack a caucus in Catawampus County, or be sent ambassador to Barataria, because he has drunk bad whiskey with every voter in Wildcat City. Should we ever attain to a conscious nationality, it will have the advantage of lessening the number of our great men, and widening our appreciation to the larger scale of the two or three that are left, — if there should be so many. Meanwhile we offer a premium to the production of great men in a small way, by inviting each State to set up the statues of two of its immortals in the Capitol. What a niggardly percentage! Already we are embarrassed,

not to find the two, but to choose among the crowd of candidates. Well, seventy-odd heroes in about as many years is pretty well for a young nation. I do not envy most of them their eternal martyrdom in marble, their pillory of indiscrimination. I fancy even native tourists pausing before the greater part of the effigies, and, after reading the names, asking desperately, "Who was *he?*" Nay, if they should say, "Who the devil was *he?*" it were a pardonable invocation, for none so fit as the Prince of Darkness to act as *cicerone* among such palpable obscurities. I recall the court-yard of the Uffizj at Florence. That also is not free of parish celebrities; but Dante, Galileo, Michel Angelo, Machiavelli, — shall the inventor of the sewing-machine, even with the button-holing improvement, let us say, match with these, or with far lesser than these? Perhaps he was more practically useful than any one of these, or all of them together, but the soul is sensible of a sad difference somewhere. These also were citizens of a provincial capital; so were the greater part of Plutarch's heroes. Did they have a better chance than we moderns, — than we Americans? At any rate they have the start of us, and we must confess that

> "By bed and table they lord it o'er us,
> Our elder brothers, but one in blood."

Yes, one in blood; that is the hardest part of it. Is our provincialism, then, in some great measure due to our absorption in the practical, as we politely call it, meaning the material, — to our habit of estimating greatness by the square mile and the

hundred weight? Even during our war, in the midst of that almost unrivalled stress of soul, were not our speakers and newspapers so enslaved to the vulgar habit as to boast ten times of the thousands of square miles it covered with armed men, for once that they alluded to the motive which gave it all its meaning and its splendor? Perhaps it was as well that they did not exploit that passion of patriotism as an advertisement in the style of Barnum or Perham. "I scale one hundred and eighty pounds, but when I 'm mad I weigh two ton," said the Kentuckian, with a true notion of moral avoirdupois. That ideal kind of weight is wonderfully increased by a national feeling, whereby one man is conscious that thirty millions of men go into the balance with him. The Roman in ancient and the Englishman in modern times have been most conscious of this representative solidity, and wherever one of them went, there stood Rome or England in his shoes. We have made some advance in the right direction. Our Civil War, by the breadth of its proportions and the implacability of its demands, forced us to admit a truer valuation, and gave us, in our own despite, great soldiers, sailors, and statesmen allowed for such by all the world. The harder problems it has left behind may in time compel us to have great statesmen again, with views capable of reaching beyond the next election. The criticism of Europe alone can rescue us from the provincialism of an over or false estimate of ourselves. Let us be thankful, and not angry, that we must accept it as our touch-

stone. Our stamp has so often been impressed upon base metal, that we cannot expect it to be taken on trust, but we may be sure that true gold will be equally persuasive the world over. Real manhood and honest achievement are nowhere provincial, but enter the select society of all time on an even footing.

Spanish America might be a good glass for us to look into. Those Catharine-wheel republics, always in revolution while the powder lasts, and sure to burn the fingers of whoever attempts intervention, have also their great men, as placidly ignored by us as our own by jealous Europe. The following passage from the life of Don Simon Bolivar might allay many *motus animorum*, if rightly pondered. Bolivar, then a youth, was travelling in Italy, and his biographer tells us that "near Castiglione he was present at the grand review made by Napoleon of the columns defiling into the plain large enough to contain sixty thousand men. The throne was situated on an eminence that overlooked the plain, and Napoleon on several occasions looked through a glass at Bolivar and his companions, who were at the base of the hill. The hero Cæsar could not imagine that he beheld the liberator of the world of Columbus!" And small blame to him, one would say. We are not, then, it seems, the only foundling of Columbus, as we are so apt to take for granted. The great Genoese did not, as we supposed, draw that first star-guided furrow across the vague of waters with a single eye to the future greatness of the United States. And have

we not sometimes, like the enthusiastic biographer, fancied the Old World staring through all its telescopes at us, and wondered that it did not recognize in us what we were fully persuaded we were *going* to be and do?

Our American life is dreadfully barren of those elements of the social picturesque which give piquancy to anecdote. And without anecdote, what is biography, or even history, which is only biography on a larger scale? Clio, though she take airs on herself, and pretend to be "philosophy teaching by example," is, after all, but a gossip who has borrowed Fame's speaking-trumpet, and should be figured with a tea-cup instead of a scroll in her hand. How much has she not owed of late to the tittle-tattle of her gillflirt sister Thalia? In what gutters has not Macaulay raked for the brilliant bits with which he has put together his admirable mosaic picture of England under the last two Stuarts? Even Mommsen himself, who dislikes Plutarch's method as much as Montaigne loved it, cannot get or give a lively notion of ancient Rome, without running to the comic poets and the anecdote-mongers. He gives us the very beef-tea of history, nourishing and even palatable enough, excellently portable for a memory that must carry her own packs, and can afford little luggage; but for my own part, I prefer a full, old-fashioned meal, with its side-dishes of spicy gossip, and its last relish, the Stilton of scandal, so it be not too high. One volume of contemporary memoirs, stuffed though it be with lies, (for lies to be good for anything

must have a potential probability, must even be true so far as their moral and social setting is concerned,) will throw more light into the dark backward of time than the gravest Camden or Thuanus. If St. Simon be not accurate, is he any the less essentially *true?* No history gives us so clear an understanding of the moral condition of average men after the restoration of the Stuarts as the unconscious blabbings of the Puritan tailor's son, with his two consciences, as it were, — an inward, still sensitive in spots, though mostly toughened to India-rubber, and good rather for rubbing out old scores than for retaining them, and an outward, alert, and termagantly effective in Mrs. Pepys. But we can have no St. Simons or Pepyses till we have a Paris or London to delocalize our gossip and give it historic breadth. All our capitals are fractional, merely greater or smaller gatherings of men, centres of business rather than of action or influence. Each contains so many souls, but is not, as the word "capital" implies, the true head of a community and seat of its common soul.

Has not life itself perhaps become a little more prosaic than it once was? As the clearing away of the woods scants the streams, may not our civilization have dried up some feeders that helped to swell the current of individual and personal force? I have sometimes thought that the stricter definition and consequent seclusion from each other of the different callings in modern times, as it narrowed the chance of developing and giving variety to character, lessened also the interest of biog-

raphy. Formerly arts and arms were not divided by so impassable a barrier as now. There was hardly such a thing as a *pékin*. Cæsar gets up from writing his Latin Grammar to conquer Gaul, change the course of history, and make so many things possible, — among the rest our English language and Shakespeare. Horace had been a colonel; and from Æschylus, who fought at Marathon, to Ben Jonson, who trailed a pike in the Low Countries, the list of martial civilians is a long one. A man's education seems more complete who has smelt hostile powder from a less æsthetic distance than Goethe. It raises our confidence in Sir Kenelm Digby as a physicist, that he is able to illustrate some theory of acoustics in his Treatise of Bodies by instancing the effect of his guns in a sea-fight off Scanderoon. One would expect the proportions of character to be enlarged by such variety and contrast of experience. Perhaps it will by and by appear that our own Civil War has done something for us in this way. Colonel Higginson comes down from his pulpit to draw on his jack-boots, and thenceforth rides in our imagination alongside of John Bunyan and Bishop Compton. To have stored moral capital enough to meet the drafts of Death at sight must be an unmatched tonic. We saw our light-hearted youth come back with the modest gravity of age, as if they had learned to throw out pickets against a surprise of any weak point in their temperament. Perhaps that American shiftiness, so often complained of, may not be so bad a thing, if, by bringing men

acquainted with every humor of fortune and human nature, it put them in fuller possession of themselves.

But with whatever drawbacks in special circumstances, the main interest of biography must always lie in the amount of character or essential manhood which the subject of it reveals to us, and events are of import only as means to that end. It is true that lofty and far-seen exigencies may give greater opportunity to some men, whose energy is more sharply spurred by the shout of a multitude than by the grudging *Well done!* of conscience. Some theorists have too hastily assumed that, as the power of public opinion increases, the force of private character, or what we call originality, is absorbed into and diluted by it. But I think Horace was right in putting tyrant and mob on a level as the trainers and tests of a man's solid quality. The amount of resistance of which one is capable to whatever lies outside the conscience, is of more consequence than all other faculties together; and democracy, perhaps, tries this by pressure in more directions, and with a more continuous strain, than any other form of society. In Josiah Quincy we have an example of character trained and shaped, under the nearest approach to a pure democracy the world has ever seen, to a firmness, unity, and self-centred poise that recall the finer types of antiquity, in which the public and private man were so wholly of a piece that they were truly everywhere at home, for the same sincerity of nature that dignified the hearth carried also a charm

of homeliness into the forum. The phrase "a great public character," once common, seems to be going out of fashion, perhaps because there are fewer examples of the thing. It fits Josiah Quincy exactly. Active in civic and academic duties till beyond the ordinary period of man, at fourscore and ten his pen, voice, and venerable presence were still efficient in public affairs. A score of years after the energies of even vigorous men are declining or spent, his mind and character made themselves felt as in their prime. A true pillar of house and state, he stood unflinchingly upright under whatever burden might be laid upon him. The French Revolutionists aped what was itself but a parody of the elder republic, with their hair *à la* Brutus and their pedantic moralities *à la* Cato Minor, but this man unconsciously was the antique Roman they laboriously went about to be. Others have filled places more conspicuous, few have made the place they filled so conspicuous by an exact and disinterested performance of duty.

In the biography of Mr. Quincy by his son there is something of the provincialism of which we have spoken as inherent in most American works of the kind. His was a Boston life in the strictest sense. But provincialism is relative, and where it has a flavor of its own, as in Scotland, it is often agreeable in proportion to its very intensity. The Massachusetts in which Mr. Quincy's habits of thought were acquired was a very different Massachusetts from that in which we of later generations have been bred. Till after he had passed middle life,

Boston was more truly a capital than any other city in America, before or since, except possibly Charleston. The acknowledged head of New England, with a population of wellnigh purely English descent, mostly derived from the earlier emigration, with ancestral traditions and inspiring memories of its own, it had made its name familiar in both worlds, and was both historically and politically more important than at any later period. The Revolution had not interrupted, but rather given a freer current to the tendencies of its past. Both by its history and position, the town had what the French call a solidarity, an almost personal consciousness, rare anywhere, rare especially in America, and more than ever since our enormous importation of fellow-citizens to whom America means merely shop, or meat three times a day. Boston has been called the "American Athens." Æsthetically, the comparison is ludicrous, but politically it was more reasonable. Its population was homogeneous, and there were leading families; while the form of government by town-meeting, and the facility of social and civic intercourse, gave great influence to popular personal qualities and opportunity to new men. A wide commerce, while it had insensibly softened the asperities of Puritanism and imported enough foreign refinement to humanize, not enough foreign luxury to corrupt, had not essentially qualified the native tone of the town. Retired sea-captains (true brothers of Chaucer's Shipman), whose exploits had kindled the imagination of Burke, added a not unpleasant savor

of salt to society. They belonged to the old school of Gilbert, Hawkins, Frobisher, and Drake, parcel-soldiers all of them, who had commanded armed ships and had tales to tell of gallant fights with privateers or pirates, truest representatives of those Vikings who, if trade in lumber or peltry was dull, would make themselves Dukes of Dublin or Earls of Orkney. If trade pinches the mind, commerce liberalizes it; and Boston was also advantaged with the neighborhood of the country's oldest College, which maintained the wholesome traditions of culture, — where Homer and Horace are familiar there is a certain amount of cosmopolitanism, — and would not allow bigotry to become despotism. Manners were more self-respectful, and therefore more respectful of others, and personal sensitiveness was fenced with more of that ceremonial with which society armed itself when it surrendered the ruder protection of the sword. We had not then seen a Governor in his chamber at the State-House with his hat on, a cigar in his mouth, and his feet upon the stove. Domestic service, in spite of the proverb, was not seldom an inheritance, nor was household peace dependent on the whim of a foreign armed neutrality in the kitchen. Servant and master were of one stock; there was decent authority and becoming respect; the tradition of the Old World lingered after its superstition had passed away. There was an aristocracy such as is healthful in a well-ordered community, founded on public service, and hereditary so long as the virtue which was its patent was not escheated. The clergy, no

longer hedged with the reverence exacted by sacerdotal caste, were more than repaid by the consideration willingly paid to superior culture. What changes, many of them for the better, some of them surely for the worse, and all of them inevitable, did not Josiah Quincy see in that wellnigh secular life which linked the war of independence to the war of nationality! I seemed to see a type of them the other day in a colored man standing with an air of comfortable self-possession while his boots were brushed by a youth of catholic neutral tint, but whom nature had planned for white. The same eyes that had looked on Gage's red-coats saw Colonel Shaw's negro regiment march out of Boston in the national blue. Seldom has a life, itself actively associated with public affairs, spanned so wide a chasm for the imagination. Oglethorpe's offers a parallel, — the aide-de-camp of Prince Eugene calling on John Adams, American Ambassador to England. Most long lives resemble those threads of gossamer, the nearest approach to nothing unmeaningly prolonged, scarce visible pathway of some worm from his cradle to his grave; but Quincy's was strung with seventy active years, each one a rounded bead of usefulness and service.

Mr. Quincy was a Bostonian of the purest type. Since the settlement of the town, there had been a colonel of the Boston regiment in every generation of his family. He lived to see a grandson brevetted with the same title for gallantry in the field. Only child of one among the most eminent advocates of the Revolution, and who but for his un-

timely death would have been a leading actor in it, his earliest recollections belonged to the heroic period in the history of his native town. With that history his life was thenceforth intimately united by offices of public trust, as Representative in Congress, State Senator, Mayor, and President of the University, to a period beyond the ordinary span of mortals. Even after he had passed ninety, he would not claim to be *emeritus*, but came forward to brace his townsmen with a courage and warm them with a fire younger than their own. The legend of Colonel Goffe at Deerfield became a reality to the eyes of this generation. The New England breed is running out, we are told! This was in all ways a beautiful and fortunate life, fortunate in the goods of this world, fortunate, above all, in the force of character which makes fortune secondary and subservient. We are fond in this country of what are called self-made men (as if real success could ever be other); and this is all very well, provided they make something worth having of themselves. Otherwise it is not so well, and the examples of such are at best but stuff for the Alnaschar dreams of a false democracy. The gist of the matter is, not where a man starts from, but where he comes out. I am glad to have the biography of one who, beginning as a gentleman, kept himself such to the end, — who, with no necessity of labor, left behind him an amount of thoroughly done work such as few have accomplished with the mighty help of hunger. Some kind of pace may be got out of the veriest

jade by the near prospect of oats; but the thorough-bred has the spur in his blood.

Mr. Edmund Quincy has told the story of his father's life with the skill and good taste that might have been expected from the author of "Wensley." Considering natural partialities, he has shown a discretion of which we are oftener reminded by missing than by meeting it. He has given extracts enough from speeches to show their bearing and quality, from letters, to recall bygone modes of thought and indicate many-sided friendly relations with good and eminent men; above all, he has lost no opportunity to illustrate that life of the past, near in date, yet alien in manners, whose current glides so imperceptibly from one generation into another that we fail to mark the shiftings of its bed or the change in its nature wrought by the affluents that discharge into it on all sides, — here a stream bred in the hills to sweeten, there the sewerage of some great city to corrupt. We cannot but lament that Mr. Quincy did not earlier begin to keep a diary. "Miss not the discourses of the elders," though put now in the Apocrypha, is a wise precept, but incomplete unless we add, "Nor cease from recording whatsoever thing thou hast gathered therefrom," — so ready is Oblivion with her fatal curfew. The somewhat greasy heap of a literary rag-and-bone-picker, like Athenæus, is turned to gold by time. Even the *Virgilium vidi tantum* of Dryden about Milton, and of Pope again about Dryden, is worth having, and gives a pleasant fillip to the fancy.

There is much of this quality in Mr. Edmund Quincy's book, enough to make us wish there were more. We get a glimpse of President Washington, in 1795, who reminded Mr. Quincy "of the gentlemen who used to come to Boston in those days to attend the General Court from Hampden or Franklin County, in the western part of the State. A little stiff in his person, not a little formal in his manners, not particularly at ease in the presence of strangers. He had the air of a country-gentleman not accustomed to mix much in society, perfectly polite, but not easy in his address and conversation, and not graceful in his gait and movements." Our figures of Washington have been so long equestrian, that it is pleasant to meet him dismounted for once. In the same way we get a card of invitation to a dinner of sixty covers at John Hancock's, and see the rather light-weighted great man wheeled round the room (for he had adopted Lord Chatham's convenient trick of the gout) to converse with his guests. In another place we are presented, with Mr. Merry, the English Minister, to Jefferson, whom we find in an unofficial costume of studied slovenliness, intended as a snub to haughty Albion. Slippers down at the heel and a dirty shirt become weapons of diplomacy and threaten more serious war. Thus many a door into the past, long irrevocably shut upon us, is set ajar, and we of the younger generation on the landing catch peeps of distinguished men and bits of their table-talk. We drive in from Mr. Lyman's beautiful seat at Waltham

(unique at that day in its stately swans and half-shy, half-familiar deer) with John Adams, who tells us that Dr. Priestley looked on the French monarchy as the tenth horn of the Beast in Revelation, — a horn that has set more sober wits dancing than that of Huon of Bordeaux. Those were days, I am inclined to think, of more solid and elegant hospitality than our own, — the elegance of manners, at once more courtly and more frugal, of men who had better uses for wealth than merely to display it. Dinners have more courses now, and, like the Gascon in the old story, who could not see the town for the houses, we miss the real dinner in the multiplicity of its details. We might seek long before we found so good cheer, so good company, or so good talk as our fathers had at Lieutenant-Governor Winthrop's or Senator Cabot's.

I shall not do Mr. Edmund Quincy the wrong of picking out in advance all the plums in his volume, leaving to the reader only the less savory mixture that held them together, — a kind of filling unavoidable in books of this kind, and too apt to be what boys at boarding-school call *stick-jaw*, but of which there is no more than could not be helped here, and that light and palatable. But here and there is a passage where I cannot refrain, for there is a smack of Jack Horner in all of us, and a reviewer were nothing without it. Josiah Quincy was born in 1772. His father, returning from a mission to England, died in sight of the dear New England shore three years later.

His young widow was worthy of him, and of the son whose character she was to have so large a share in forming. There is something very touching and beautiful in this little picture of her which Mr. Quincy drew in his extreme old age.

"My mother imbibed, as was usual with the women of the period, the spirit of the times. Patriotism was not then a profession, but an energetic principle beating in the heart and active in the life. The death of my father, under circumstances now the subject of history, had overwhelmed her with grief. She viewed him as a victim in the cause of freedom, and cultivated his memory with veneration, regarding him as a martyr, falling, as did his friend Warren, in the defence of the liberties of his country. These circumstances gave a pathos and vehemence to her grief, which, after the first violence of passion had subsided, sought consolation in earnest and solicitous fulfilment of duty to the representative of his memory and of their mutual affections. Love and reverence for the memory of his father was early impressed on the mind of her son, and worn into his heart by her sadness and tears. She cultivated the memory of my father in my heart and affections, even in my earliest childhood, by reading to me passages from the poets, and obliging me to learn by heart and repeat such as were best adapted to her own circumstances and feelings. Among others, the whole leave-taking of Hector and Andromache, in the sixth book of Pope's Homer, was one of her favorite lessons, which she made me learn and frequently

repeat. Her imagination, probably, found consolation in the repetition of lines which brought to mind and seemed to typify her own great bereavement.

> 'And think'st thou not how wretched we shall be, —
> A widow I, a helpless orphan he ?'

These lines, and the whole tenor of Andromache's address and circumstances, she identified with her own sufferings, which seemed relieved by the tears my repetition of them drew from her."

Pope's Homer is not Homer, perhaps ; but how many noble natures have felt its elation, how many bruised spirits the solace of its bracing, if monotonous melody ! To me there is something inexpressibly tender in this instinct of the widowed mother to find consolation in the idealization of her grief by mingling it with those sorrows which genius has turned into the perennial delight of mankind. This was a kind of sentiment that was healthy for her boy, that refined without unnerving, and associated his father's memory with a noble company inaccessible to Time. It was through this lady, whose image looks down on us out of the past, so full of sweetness and refinement, that Mr. Quincy became of kin with Mr. Wendell Phillips, so justly renowned as a speaker. There is something nearer than cater-cousinship in a certain impetuous audacity of temper common to them both.

When six years old, Mr. Quincy was sent to Phillips Academy at Andover, where he remained till he entered college. His form-fellow here was a man of thirty, who had been a surgeon in the Con-

tinental Army, and whose character and adventures might almost seem borrowed from a romance of Smollett. Under Principal Pearson, the lad, though a near relative of the founder of the school, seems to have endured all that severity of the old *a posteriori* method of teaching which still smarted in Tusser's memory when he sang,

> "From Paul's I went, to Eton sent,
> To learn straightways the Latin phrase,
> Where fifty-three stripes given to me
> At once I had."

The young victim of the wisdom of Solomon was boarded with the parish minister, in whose kindness he found a lenitive for the scholastic discipline he underwent. This gentleman had been a soldier in the Colonial service, and Mr. Quincy afterwards gave as a reason for his mildness, that, "while a sergeant at Castle William, he had seen something of mankind." This, no doubt, would be a better preparative for successful dealing with the young than is generally thought. However, the birch was then the only classic tree, and every round in the ladder of learning was made of its inspiring wood. Dr. Pearson, perhaps, thought he was only doing justice to his pupil's privilege of kin by giving him a larger share of the educational advantages which the neighboring forest afforded. The vividness with which this system is always remembered by those who have been subjected to it would seem to show that it really enlivened the attention and thereby invigorated the memory, nay, might even raise some question as to what part of the person

is chosen by the mother of the Muses for her residence. With an appetite for the classics quickened by "Cheever's Accidence," and such other preliminary whets as were then in vogue, young Quincy entered college, where he spent the usual four years, and was graduated with the highest honors of his class. The amount of Latin and Greek imparted to the students of that day was not very great. They were carried through Horace, Sallust, and the *De Oratoribus* of Cicero, and read portions of Livy, Xenophon, and Homer. Yet the chief end of classical studies was perhaps as often reached then as now, in giving young men a love for something apart from and above the more vulgar associations of life. Mr. Quincy, at least, retained to the last a fondness for certain Latin authors. While he was President of the College, he said to a gentleman, who told me the story, that, "if he were imprisoned, and allowed to choose one book for his amusement, that should be Horace."

In 1797 Mr. Quincy was married to Miss Eliza Susan Morton of New York, a union which lasted in unbroken happiness for more than fifty years. His case might be cited among the leading ones in support of the old poet's axiom, that

> "He never loved, that loved not at first sight;"

for he saw, wooed, and won in a week. In later life he tried in a most amusing way to account for this rashness, and to find reasons of settled gravity for the happy inspiration of his heart. He cites the evidence of Judge Sedgwick, of Mr. and Mrs.

Oliver Wolcott, of the Rev. Dr. Smith, and others, to the wisdom of his choice. But it does not appear that he consulted them beforehand. If love were not too cunning for that, what would become of the charming idyl, renewed in all its wonder and freshness for every generation? Let us be thankful that in every man's life there is a holiday of romance, an illumination of the senses by the soul, that makes him a poet while it lasts. Mr. Quincy caught the enchantment through his ears, a song of Burns heard from the next room conveying the infection, — a fact still inexplicable to him after life-long meditation thereon, as he "was not very impressible by music"! To me there is something very characteristic in this rapid energy of Mr. Quincy, something very delightful in his naive account of the affair. It needs the magic of no Dr. Heidegger to make these dried roses, that drop from between the leaves of a volume shut for seventy years, bloom again in all their sweetness. Mr. Edmund Quincy tells us that his mother was "not handsome;" but those who remember the gracious dignity of her old age will hardly agree with him. She must always have had that highest kind of beauty which grows more beautiful with years, and keeps the eyes young, as if with the partial connivance of Time.

I do not propose to follow Mr. Quincy closely through his whole public life, which, beginning with his thirty-second, ended with his seventy-third year. He entered Congress as the representative of a party, privately the most respectable, publicly the

Josiah Quincy

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least sagacious, among all those which under different names have divided the country. The Federalists were the only proper tories our politics have ever produced, whose conservatism truly represented an idea, and not a mere selfish interest, — men who honestly distrusted democracy, and stood up for experience, or the tradition which they believed to be such, against empiricism. During his Congressional career, the government was little more than an *attaché* of the French legation, and the opposition to which he belonged a helpless *revenant* from the dead and buried Colonial past. There are some questions whose interest dies the moment they are settled; others, into which a moral element enters that hinders them from being settled, though they may be decided. It is hard to revive any heat of temper about the Embargo, though it once could inspire the boyish Muse of Bryant, or in the impressment quarrel, though the Trent difficulty for a time rekindled its old animosities. The stars in their courses fought against Mr. Quincy's party, which was not in sympathy with the instincts of the people, groping about for some principle of nationality, and finding a substitute for it in hatred of England. But there are several things which still make his career in Congress interesting to us, because they illustrate the personal character of the man. He prepared himself honestly for his duties, by a thorough study of whatever could make him efficient in them. It was not enough that he could make a good speech; he wished also to have something to say. In Congress, as everywhere else,

quod voluit valde voluit; and he threw a fervor into the most temporary topic, as if his eternal salvation depended upon it. He had not merely, as the French say, the courage of his opinions, but his opinions became principles, and gave him that gallantry of fanaticism which made him always ready to head a forlorn hope, — the more ready, perhaps, that it was a forlorn hope. This is not the humor of a statesman, — no, unless he hold a position like that of Pitt, and can charge a whole people with his own enthusiasm, and then we call it genius. Mr. Quincy had the moral firmness which enabled him to decline a duel without any loss of personal *prestige.* His opposition to the Louisiana purchase (Jefferson's best legacy in the way of statesmanship) illustrates that Roman quality in him to which we have alluded. He would not conclude the purchase till each of the old thirteen States had signified its assent. He was reluctant to endow a Sabine city with the privilege of Roman citizenship. It is worth noting, that while in Congress, and afterwards in the State Senate, many of his phrases became the catch-words of party politics. He always dared to say what others deemed it more prudent only to think, and whatever he said he intensified with the whole ardor of his temperament. It is this which makes Mr. Quincy's speeches good reading still, even when the topics they discussed were ephemeral. In one respect he is distinguished from the politicians, and must rank with the far-seeing statesmen of his time. He early foresaw and denounced the political danger

with which the Slave Power threatened the Union. His fears, it is true, were aroused for the balance of power between the old States, rather than by any moral sensitiveness, which would, indeed, have been an anachronism at that time. But the Civil War justified his prescience.

It was as Mayor of his native city that his remarkable qualities as an administrator were first called into requisition and adequately displayed. He organized the city government, and put it in working order. To him we owe many reforms in police, in the management of the poor, and other kindred matters, — much in the way of cure, still more in that of prevention. The place demanded a man of courage and firmness, and found those qualities almost superabundantly in him. His virtues lost him his office, as such virtues are only too apt to do in peaceful times, where they are felt more as a restraint than a protection. His address on laying down the mayoralty is very characteristic. Let me quote the concluding sentences: —

"And now, gentlemen, standing as I do in this relation for the last time in your presence and that of my fellow-citizens, about to surrender forever a station full of difficulty, of labor and temptation, in which I have been called to very arduous duties, affecting the rights, property, and at times the liberty of others; concerning which the perfect line of rectitude — though desired — was not always to be clearly discerned; in which great interests have been placed within my control, under circumstances in which it would have been easy to advance pri-

vate ends and sinister projects; — under these circumstances, I inquire, as I have a right to inquire, — for in the recent contest insinuations have been cast against my integrity, — in this long management of your affairs, whatever errors have been committed, — and doubtless there have been many, — have you found in me anything selfish, anything personal, anything mercenary? In the simple language of an ancient seer, I say, 'Behold, here I am; witness against me. Whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed? At whose hands have I received any bribe?'

"Six years ago, when I had the honor first to address the City Council, in anticipation of the event which has now occurred, the following expressions were used: 'In administering the police, in executing the laws, in protecting the rights and promoting the prosperity of the city, its first officer will be necessarily beset and assailed by individual interests, by rival projects, by personal influences, by party passions. The more firm and inflexible he is in maintaining the rights and in pursuing the interests of the city, the greater is the probability of his becoming obnoxious to the censure of all whom he causes to be prosecuted or punished, of all whose passions he thwarts, of all whose interests he opposes.'

"The day and the event have come. I retire — as in that first address I told my fellow-citizens, 'If, in conformity with the experience of other republics, faithful exertions should be followed by loss of favor and confidence,' I should retire —

'rejoicing, not, indeed, with a public and patriotic, but with a private and individual joy;' for I shall retire with a consciousness weighed against which all *human suffrages* are but as the light dust of the balance."

Of his mayoralty we have another anecdote quite Roman in color. He was in the habit of driving early in the morning through the various streets that he might look into everything with his own eyes. He was once arrested on a malicious charge of violating the city ordinance against fast driving. He might have resisted, but he appeared in court and paid the fine, because it would serve as a good example "that no citizen was above the law."

Hardly had Mr. Quincy given up the government of the city, when he was called to that of the College. It is here that his stately figure is associated most intimately and warmly with the recollections of the greater number who hold his memory dear. Almost everybody looks back regretfully to the days of some Consul Plancus. Never were eyes so bright, never had wine so much wit and good-fellowship in it, never were we ourselves so capable of the various great things we have never done. Nor is it merely the sunset of life that casts such a ravishing light on the past, and makes the western windows of those homes of fancy we have left forever tremble with the reflected glow of such sweet regret. We set great store by what we had, and cannot have again, however indifferent in itself, and what is past is infinitely past. This is especially true of college life, when we first assume the

titles without the responsibilities of manhood, an the President of our year is apt to become ou Plancus very early. Popular or not while in offic an ex-president is always sure of enthusiastic cheer at every college festival. Mr. Quincy had man qualities calculated to win favor with the young, — that one above all which is sure to do it, indomi table pluck. With him the dignity was in the man not in the office. He had some of those little oddi ties, too, which afford amusement without contempt and which rather tend to heighten than diminish personal attachment to superiors in station. Hi punctuality at prayers, and in dropping asleep there, his forgetfulness of names, his singular in ability to make even the shortest off-hand speech to the students, — all the more singular in a prac tised orator, — his occasional absorption of mind leading him to hand you his sand-box instead of the leave of absence he had just dried with it, — the old-fashioned courtesy of his "Sir, your ser vant," as he bowed you out of his study, — all tended to make him popular. He had also a little of what is somewhat contradictorily called dry humor, not without influence in his relations with the students. In taking leave of the graduating class, he was in the habit of paying them whatever honest compliment he could. Who, of a certain year which shall be nameless, will ever forget the gravity with which he assured them that they were "the *best-dressed* class that had passed through college during his administration"? How sin cerely kind he was, how considerate of youthful

levity, will always be gratefully remembered by whoever had occasion to experience it. A visitor not long before his death found him burning some memoranda of college peccadilloes, lest they should ever rise up in judgment against the men eminent in Church and State who had been guilty of them. One great element of his popularity with the students was his *esprit de corps.* However strict in discipline, he was always on *our* side as respected the outside world. Of his efficiency, no higher testimony could be asked than that of his successor, Dr. Walker. Here also many reforms date from his time. He had that happiest combination for a wise vigor in the conduct of affairs, — he was a conservative with an open mind.

One would be apt to think that, in the various offices which Mr. Quincy successively filled, he would have found enough to do. But his indefatigable activity overflowed. Even as a man of letters, he occupies no inconsiderable place. His "History of Harvard College" is a valuable and entertaining treatment of a subject not wanting in natural dryness. His "Municipal History of Boston," his "History of the Boston Athenæum," and his "Life of Colonel Shaw" have permanent interest and value. All these were works demanding no little labor and research, and the thoroughness of their workmanship makes them remarkable as the by-productions of a busy man. Having consented, when more than eighty, to write a memoir of John Quincy Adams, to be published in the "Proceedings" of the Massachusetts Historical Society, he

was obliged to excuse himself. On account of his age? Not at all, but because the work had grown to be a volume under his weariless hand. *Ohne Hast ohne Rast* was as true of him as of Goethe. We find the explanation of his accomplishing so much in a rule of life which he gave, when President, to a young man employed as his secretary, and who was a little behindhand with his work: "When you have a number of duties to perform, always do the most disagreeable one first." No advice could have been more in character, and it is perhaps better than the great German's, "Do the duty that lies nearest thee."

Perhaps the most beautiful part of Mr. Quincy's life was his old age. What in most men is decay was in him but beneficent prolongation and adjournment. His interest in affairs unabated, his judgment undimmed, his fire unchilled, his last years were indeed "lovely as a Lapland night." Till within a year or two of its fall, there were no signs of dilapidation in that stately edifice. Singularly felicitous was Mr. Winthrop's application to him of Wordsworth's verses: —

> "The monumental pomp of age
> Was in that goodly personage."

Everything that Macbeth foreboded the want of, he had in deserved abundance, — the love, the honor, the obedience, the troops of friends. His equanimity was beautiful. He loved life, as men of large vitality always do, but he did not fear to lose life by changing the scene of it. Visiting him in his ninetieth year with a friend, he said to us,

among other things: "I have no desire to die, but also no reluctance. Indeed, I have a considerable curiosity about the other world. I have never been to Europe, you know." Even in his extreme senescence there was an April mood somewhere in his nature "that put a spirit of youth in everything." He seemed to feel that he could draw against an unlimited credit of years. When eighty-two, he said smilingly to a young man just returned from a foreign tour, "Well, well, I mean to go myself when I am old enough to profit by it." I have seen many old men whose lives were mere waste and desolation, who made longevity disreputable by their untimely persistence in it; but in Mr. Quincy's length of years there was nothing that was not venerable. To him it was fulfilment, not deprivation; the days were marked to the last for what they brought, not for what they took away.

The memory of what Mr. Quincy did will be lost in the crowd of newer activities; it is the memory of what he was that is precious to us. *Bonum virum facile crederes, magnum libenter.* If John Winthrop be the highest type of the men who shaped New England, we can find no better one of those whom New England has shaped than Josiah Quincy. It is a figure that we can contemplate with more than satisfaction, a figure of admirable example in a democracy, as that of a model citizen. His courage and high-mindedness were personal to him; let us believe that his integrity, his industry, his love of letters, his devotion to duty,

go in some sort to the credit of the society whi
gave him birth and formed his character. In o
respect he is especially interesting to us, as belor
ing to a class of men of whom he was the last re
resentative, and whose like we shall never s
again. Born and bred in an age of greater soci
distinctions than ours, he was an aristocrat in
sense that is good even in a republic. He had t
sense of a certain personal dignity *inherent* in hi
and which could not be alienated by any whim
the popular will. There is no stouter buckler tha
this for independence of spirit, no surer guaranty
that courtesy which, in its consideration of other
is but paying a debt of self-respect. During h
presidency, Mr. Quincy was once riding to Car
bridge in a crowded omnibus. A colored woma
got in, and could nowhere find a seat. The Pres
dent instantly gave her his own, and stood the re
of the way, a silent rebuke of the general rudenes
He was a man of quality in the true sense, —
quality not hereditary, but personal. Positio
might be taken from him, but *he* remained whe
he was. In what he valued most, his sense of pe
sonal worth, the world's opinion could neither hel
nor hinder. I do not mean that this was co
scious in him; if it had been, it would have been
weakness. It was an instinct, and acted with th
force and promptitude proper to such. Let
hope that the scramble of democracy will give
something as good; anything of so classic dignit
we shall not look to see again.

Josiah Quincy was no seeker of office; fro

first to last he and it were drawn together by the mutual attraction of need and fitness, and it clung to him as most men cling to it. The people often make blunders in their choice; they are apt to mistake presence of speech for presence of mind; they love so to help a man rise from the ranks, that they will spoil a good demagogue to make a bad general; a great many faults may be laid at their door, but they are not fairly to be charged with fickleness. They are constant to whoever is constant to his real self, to the best manhood that is in him, and not to the mere selfishness, the *antica lupa* so cunning to hide herself in the sheep's fleece even from ourselves. It is true, the contemporary world is apt to be the gull of brilliant parts, and the maker of a lucky poem or picture or statue, the winner of a lucky battle, gets perhaps more than is due to the solid result of his triumph. It is time that fit honor should be paid also to him who shows a genius for public usefulness, for the achievement of character, who shapes his life to a certain classic proportion, and comes off conqueror on those inward fields where something more than mere talent is demanded for victory. The memory of such men should be cherished as the most precious inheritance which one generation can bequeath to the next. However it might be with popular favor, public respect followed Mr. Quincy unwaveringly for seventy years, and it was because he had never forfeited his own. In this, it appears to me, lies the lesson of his life and his claim upon our grateful recollection. It is this which makes him

an example, while the careers of so many of our prominent men are only useful for warning. As regards history, his greatness was narrowly provincial; but if the measure of deeds be the spirit in which they are done, that fidelity to instant duty, which, according to Herbert, makes an action fine, then his length of years should be very precious to us for its lesson. Talleyrand, whose life may be compared with his for the strange vicissitude which it witnessed, carried with him out of the world the respect of no man, least of all his own; and how many of our own public men have we seen whose old age but accumulated a disregard which they would gladly have exchanged for oblivion! In Quincy the public fidelity was loyal to the private, and the withdrawal of his old age was into a sanctuary, — a diminution of publicity with addition of influence.

> "Conclude we, then, felicity consists
> Not in exterior fortunes. . . .
> Sacred felicity doth ne'er extend
> Beyond itself. . . .
> The swelling of an outward fortune can
> Create a prosperous, not a happy man."

WITCHCRAFT [1]

1868

CREDULITY, as a mental and moral phenomenon, manifests itself in widely different ways, according

[1] *Salem Witchcraft, with an Account of Salem Village, and a History of Opinions on Witchcraft and Kindred Subjects.* By Charles W. Upham. Boston: Wiggin and Lunt. 1867. 2 vols.

Ioannis Wieri de Praestigiis Daemonum, et incantationibus ac veneficiis Libri sex, postrema editione sexta aucti et recogniti. Accessit Liber Apologeticus et Pseudomonarchia Daemonum. Cum Rerum ac verborum copioso indice. Cum Caes. Maiest. Regisq; Galliarum gratia et privilegio. Basileæ, ex officina Oporiniana. 1583.

Scot's Discovery of Witchcraft: proving the common opinions of Witches contracting with Divels, Spirits, or Familiars; and their power to kill, torment, and consume the bodies of men women, and children, or other creatures by diseases or otherwise; their flying in the Air, &c. To be but imaginary Erronious conceptions and novelties; Wherein also, the lewde, unchristian practises of Witchmongers, upon aged, melancholy, ignorant, and superstitious people in extorting confessions, by inhumane terrors and tortures, is notably detected. Also The knavery and confederacy of Conjurors. The impious blasphemy of Inchanters. The imposture of Soothsayers, and Infidelity of Atheists. The delusion of Pythonists, Figure-casters, Astrologers, and vanity of Dreamers. The fruitlesse beggarly art of Alchimistry. The horrible art of Poisoning and all the tricks and conveyances of jugglĭng and Liegerdemain are fully deciphered. With many other things opened that have long lain hidden: though very necessary to be known for the undeceiving of Judges, Justices, and Juries, and for the preservation of poor, aged, deformed, ignorant people; frequently taken, arraigned, condemned and executed for Witches,

as it chances to be the daughter of fancy or terror. The one lies warm about the heart as Folk-lore,

when according to a right understanding, and a good conscience, Physick, Food, and necessaries should be administred to them. Whereunto is added, a treatise upon the nature, and substance of Spirits and Divels, &c. all written and published in *Anno* 1584. By *Reginald Scot*, Esquire. Printed by R. C. and are to be sold by Giles Calvert, dwelling at the Black Spread-Eagle, at the West-end of Pauls, 1651.

De la Demonomanie des Sorciers. A Monseigneur M. Chrestofle de Thou, Chevalier, Seigneur de Cœli, premier President en la Cour de Parlement, et Conseiller du Roy en son privé Conseil. Reueu, corrigé, et augmenté d'une grande partie. Par I. Bodin, Angevin. A Paris, Chez Iacques Du-Puys, Libraire Iuré, à la Samaritaine. M.D.LXXXVII. Avec privilege du Roy.

Magica, seu mirabilium historiarum de Spectris et Apparitionibus spirituum: Item, de magicis et diabolicis incantationibus. De Miraculis, Oraculis, Vaticiniis, Divinationibus, Prædictionibus, Revelationibus et aliis eiusmodi multis ac varijs præstigijs, ludibrijs et imposturis malorum Dæmonum. Libri II. Ex probatis et fide dignis historiarum scriptoribus diligenter collecti. Islebiæ, cura, typis et sumptibus Henningi Grossij Bibl. Lipo. 1597. Cum privilegio.

The displaying of supposed Witchcraft. Wherein is affirmed that there are many sorts of Deceivers and Impostors, and divers persons under a passive delusion of Melancholy and Fancy. But that there is a corporeal league made betwixt the Devil and the Witch, or that he sucks on the Witches body, has carnal copulation, or that Witches are turned into Cats, Dogs, raise Tempests, or the like, is utterly denied and disproved. Wherein also is handled, The existence of Angels and Spirits, the truth of Apparitions, the Nature of Astral and Sydereal Spirits, the force of Charms, and Philters; with other abstruse matters. By John Webster, Practitioner in Physick. Falsæ etenim opiniones Hominum præoccupantes non solum surdos sed et cæcos faciunt, ita ut videre nequeant quæ aliis perspicua apparent. Galen. lib. 8, de Comp. Med. London: Printed by J. M. and are to be sold by the booksellers in London. 1677.

Sadducismus Triumphatus: or Full and Plain Evidence concerning Witches and Apparitions. In two Parts. The First treat-

fills moonlit dells with dancing fairies, sets out a meal for the Brownie, hears the tinkle of airy bri-

ing of their Possibility; the Second of their Real Existence. By Joseph Glanvil, late Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty, and Fellow of the Royal Society. The third edition. The Advantages whereof above the former, the Reader may understand out of Dr H. More's Account prefixed therunto. With two Authentick, but wonderful Stories of certain *Swedish Witches*. Done into English by A. Horneck DD. London, Printed for S. L. and are to be sold by Anth. Baskervile, at the Bible, the Corner of Essex-street, without Temple-Bar. M.DCLXXXIX.

Demonologie ou Traitte des Demons et Sorciers: De leur puissance et impuissance: Par Fr. Perreaud. Ensemble L'Antidemon de Mascon, ou Histoire Veritable de ce qu'un Demon a fait et dit, il y a quelques années en la maison dudit Sr Perreaud à Mascon. S. Jacques iv. 7, 8. "Resistez au Diable, et il s'enfuira de vous. Approchez vous de Dieu, et il s'approchera de vous." A Geneve, chez Pierre Aubert. M,DC,LIII.

The Wonders of the Invisible World. Being an account of the tryals of several witches lately executed in New-England. By Cotton Mather, D. D. To which is added a farther account of the tryals of the New England Witches. By Increase Mather, D. D., President of Harvard College. London: John Russell Smith, Soho Square. 1862. (First printed in Boston, 1692.)

I. N. D. N. J. C. *Dissertatio Juridica de Lamiis earumque processu criminali*, Von Hexen und dem peinl. Prozeß wider dieselben, Quam, auxiliante Divina Gratia, Consensu et Authoritate Magnifici JCtorum Ordinis in illustribus Athenis Salanis sub præsidio Magnifici, Nobilissimi, Amplissimi, Consultissimi, atque Excellentissimi Dn. Ernesti Frider. Schröter hereditarii in Widerstädt, JCti et Antecessoris hujus Salanæ Famigeratissimi, Consiliarii Saxonici, Curiæ Provincialis, Facultatis Juridicæ, et Scabinatus Assessoris longè Gravissimi, Domini Patroni, Præceptoris atq; Promotoris sui nullo non honoris et observantiæ cultu sanctè devenerandi, colendi, publicæ Eruditorum censuræ subjicit Michael Paris Walburger, Grœbzigß Anhaltinus, in Acroaterio JCtorum ad diem 1. Maj. A. 1670. Editio Tertia. Jenæ, Typis Pauli Ehrichii. 1707.

Histoire des Diables de Loudun, ou de la Possession des Religieuses Ursulines, et de la condamnation et du suplice d'Urbain

dle-bells as Tamlane rides away with the Queen of Dreams, changes Pluto and Proserpine into Oberon and Titania, and makes friends with unseen powers

Grandier, Curé de la même ville. Cruels effets de la Vengeance du Cardinal de Richelieu. A Amsterdam Aux depens de la Compagnie. M.DCC.LII. [By Aubin, a French refugee.]

A View of the Invisible World, or General History of Apparitions. Collected from the best Authorities, both Antient and Modern, and attested by Authors of the highest Reputation and Credit. Illustrated with a Variety of Notes and parallel Cases; in which some Account of the Nature and Cause of Departed Spirits visiting their former Stations by returning again into the present World, is treated in a Manner different to the prevailing Opinions of Mankind. And an Attempt is made from Rational Principles to account for the Species of such supernatural Appearances, when they may be suppos'd consistent with the Divine Appointment in the Government of the World. With the sentiments of Monsieur Le Clerc, Mr. Locke, Mr. Addison, and Others on this important Subject. In which some humorous and diverting instances are remark'd, in order to divert that Gloom of Melancholy that naturally arises in the Human Mind, from reading or meditating on such Subjects. Illustrated with suitable Cuts. London: Printed in the year M,DCC,LII. [Mainly from DeFoe's "History of Apparitions."]

Satan's Invisible World discovered; or, a choice Collection of modern Relations; Proving evidently, against the Atheists of this present Age, that there are Devils, Spirits, Witches and Apparitions, from authentic Records, Attestations of Witnesses, and undoubted Verity. To which is added that marvellous History of Major Weir and his Sister, the Witches of Bargarran, Pittenweem, and Calder, &c. By George Sinclair, late Professor of Philosophy in Glasgow. — *No man should be vain that he can injure the merit of a Book; for the meanest rogue may burn a City, or kill a Hero; whereas he could never build the one, or equal the other.* Sir George M'Kenzie. — Edinburgh: Sold by P. Anderson, Parliament-Square. M.DCC.LXXX.

La Magie et l'Astrologie dans l'Antiquité et au Moyen Age, ou Étude sur les superstitions païennes qui se sont perpétuées jusqu'à nos jours. Par L. F. Alfred Maury. Troisième Edition revue et corrigée. Paris: Didier. 1864.

as Good Folk; the other is a bird of night, whose shadow sends a chill among the roots of the hair: it sucks with the vampire, gorges with the ghoul, is choked by the night-hag, pines away under the witch's charm, and commits uncleanness with the embodied Principle of Evil, giving up the fair realm of innocent belief to a murky throng from the slums and stews of the debauched brain. Both have vanished from among educated men, and such superstition as comes to the surface nowadays is the harmless Jacobitism of sentiment, pleasing itself with a fiction all the more because there is no exacting reality behind it to impose a duty or demand a sacrifice. And as Jacobitism survived the Stuarts, so this has outlived the dynasty to which it professes an after-dinner allegiance. It nails a horseshoe over the door, but keeps a rattle by its bedside to summon a more substantial watchman; it hangs a crape on the beehives to get a taste of ideal sweetness, but obeys the teaching of the latest bee-book for material and marketable honey. This is the æsthetic variety of the malady, or rather, perhaps, it is only the old complaint robbed of all its pain, and lapped in waking dreams by the narcotism of an age of science. To the world at large it is not undelightful to see the poetical instincts of friends and neighbors finding some other vent than that of verse. But there has been a superstition of very different fibre, of more intense and practical validity, the deformed child of faith, peopling the midnight of the mind with fearful shapes and phrenetic suggestions, a monstrous

brood of its own begetting, and making even good men ferocious in imagined self-defence.

Imagination has always been, and still is, in a narrower sense, the great mythologizer; but both its mode of manifestation and the force with which it reacts on the mind are one thing in its crude form of childlike wonder, and another thing after it has been more or less consciously manipulated by the poetic faculty. A mythology that broods over us in our cradles, that mingles with the lullaby of the nurse and the winter-evening legends of the chimney-corner, that brightens day with the possibility of divine encounters, and darkens night with intimations of demonic ambushes, is of other substance than one which we take down from our bookcase, sapless as the shelf it stood on, and remote from all present sympathy with man or nature as a town history. It is something like the difference between live metaphor and dead personification. Primarily, the action of the imagination is the same in the mythologizer and the poet, that is, it forces its own consciousness on the objects of the senses, and compels them to sympathize with its own momentary impressions. When Shakespeare in his "Lucrece" makes

> "The threshold grate the door to have him heard,"

his mind is acting under the same impulse that first endowed with human feeling and then with human shape all the invisible forces of nature, and called into being those

> "Fair humanities of old religion,"

whose loss the poets mourn. So also Shakespeare no doubt projected himself in his own creations; but those creations never became so perfectly disengaged from him, so objective, or, as they used to say, extrinsical, to him, as to react upon him like real and even alien existences. I mean permanently, for momentarily they may and must have done so. But before man's consciousness had wholly disentangled itself from outward objects, all nature was but a many-sided mirror which gave back to him a thousand images of himself, more or less beautified or distorted, magnified or diminished, till his imagination grew to look upon its own incorporations as having an independent being. Thus, by degrees, it became at last passive to its own creations. You may see imaginative children every day anthropomorphizing in this way, and the dupes of that superabundant vitality in themselves, which bestows qualities proper to itself on everything about them. There is a period of development in which grown men are childlike. In such a period the fables which endow beasts with human attributes first grew up; and we luckily read them so early as never to become suspicious of any absurdity in them. The Finnic epos of "Kalewala" is a curious illustration of the same fact. In it everything has the affections, passions, and consciousness of men. When the mother of Lemminkäinen is seeking her lost son, —

> "Sought she many days the lost one,
> Sought him ever without finding;
> Then the roadways come to meet her,

And she asks them with beseeching:
'Roadways, ye whom God hath shapen,
Have ye not my son beholden,
Nowhere seen the golden apple,
Him, my darling staff of silver?'
Prudently they gave her answer,
Thus to her replied the roadways:
'For thy son we cannot plague us,
We have sorrows too, a many,
Since our own lot is a hard one
And our fortune is but evil,
By dog's feet to be run over,
By the wheel-tire to be wounded,
And by heavy heels down-trampled.'"

It is in this tendency of the mind under certa conditions to confound the objective with the su jective, or rather to mistake the one for the othe that Mr. Tylor, in his "Early History of Ma kind," is fain to seek the origin of the supernatura as we somewhat vaguely call whatever transcen our ordinary experience. And this, no doubt, wi in many cases account for the particular shap assumed by certain phantasmal appearances, thoug I am inclined to doubt whether it be a sufficie explanation of the abstract phenomenon. It easy for the arithmetician to make a key to th problems that he has devised to suit himself. A immediate and habitual confusion of the kin spoken of is insanity; and the hypochondriac tracked by the black dog of his own mind. Di ease itself is, of course, in one sense natural, as b ing the result of natural causes; but if we assum health as the mean representing the normal pois of all the mental faculties, we must be content t

call hypochondria subternatural, because the tone of the instrument is lowered, and to designate as supernatural only those ecstasies in which the mind, under intense but not unhealthy excitement, is snatched sometimes above itself, as in poets and other persons of imaginative temperament. In poets this liability to be possessed by the creations of their own brains is limited and proportioned by the artistic sense, and the imagination thus truly becomes the shaping faculty, while in less regulated or coarser organizations it dwells forever in the *Nifelheim* of phantasmagoria and dream, a thaumaturge half cheat, half dupe. What Mr. Tylor has to say on this matter is ingenious and full of valuable suggestion, and to a certain extent solves our difficulties. Nightmare, for example, will explain the testimony of witnesses in trials for witchcraft, that they had been hag-ridden by the accused. But to prove the possibility, nay, the probability, of this confusion of objective with subjective is not enough. It accounts very well for such apparitions as those which appeared to Dion, to Brutus, and to Curtius Rufus. In such cases the imagination is undoubtedly its own *doppelgänger*, and sees nothing more than the projection of its own deceit. But I am puzzled, I confess, to explain the appearance of the *first* ghost, especially among men who thought death to be the end-all here below. The thing once conceived of, it is easy, on Mr. Tylor's theory, to account for all after the first. If it was originally believed that only the spirits of those who had died violent deaths

were permitted to wander,[1] the conscience of a re morseful murderer may have been haunted by th memory of his victim, till the imagination, infecte in its turn, gave outward reality to the image o the inward eye. After putting to death Boëtiu and Symmachus, it is said that Theodoric saw i the head of a fish served at his dinner the face o Symmachus, grinning horribly and with flamin eyes, whereupon he took to his bed and died soo after in great agony of mind. It is not safe, per haps, to believe all that is reported of an Arian but supposing the story to be true, there is only short step from such a delusion of the senses to th complete ghost of popular legend. Yet, in some o the most trustworthy stories of apparitions, the have shown themselves not only to persons who ha done them no wrong in the flesh, but also to suc as had never even known them. The *eidolon* o James Haddock appeared to a man named Tave

[1] Lucian, in his *Liars*, puts this opinion into the mouth Arignotus. The theory by which Lucretius seeks to explain a paritions, though materialistic, seems to allow some influence al to the working of imagination. It is hard otherwise to expla how his *simulacra* (which are not unlike the *astral spirits* of lat times) should appear in dreams.

> . . . ea quae rerum simulacra vocamus,
> quae, quasi membranae summo de corpore rerum
> dereptae, volitant ultro citroque per auras
> atque eadem
> . . . nobis vigilantibus obvia mentes
> terrificant atque in somnis, cum saepe figuras
> contuimur miras simulacraque luce carentum
> quae nos horrifice languentis saepe sopore
> excierunt.
>
> *De Rer. Nat.* iv. 33–37, ed. Munro.

ner, that he might interest himself in recovering a piece of land unjustly kept from the dead man's infant son. If we may trust Defoe, Bishop Jeremy Taylor twice examined Taverner, and was convinced of the truth of his story. In this case, Taverner had formerly known Haddock. But the apparition of an old gentleman which entered the learned Dr. Scott's study, and directed him where to find a missing deed needful in settling what had lately been its estate in the West of England, chose for its attorney in the business an entire stranger, who had never even seen its original in the flesh.

Whatever its origin, a belief in spirits seems to have been common to all the nations of the ancient world who have left us any record of themselves. Ghosts began to walk early, and are walking still, in spite of the shrill cock-crow of *wir haben ja aufgeklärt*. Even the ghost in chains, which one would naturally take to be a fashion peculiar to convicts escaped from purgatory, is older than the belief in that reforming penitentiary. The younger Pliny tells a very good story to this effect: "There was at Athens a large and spacious house which lay under the disrepute of being haunted. In the dead of the night a noise resembling the clashing of iron was frequently heard, which, if you listened more attentively, sounded like the rattling of chains; at first it seemed at a distance, but approached nearer by degrees; immediately afterward a spectre appeared, in the form of an old man, extremely meagre and ghastly, with a long

beard and dishevelled hair, rattling the chains o
his feet and hands. . . . By this means the hou
was at last deserted, being judged by everybody
be absolutely uninhabitable; so that it was no
entirely abandoned to the ghost. However, i
hopes that some tenant might be found who w
ignorant of this great calamity which attended i
a bill was put up giving notice that it was either
be let or sold. It happened that the philosoph
Athenodorus came to Athens at this time, an
reading the bill, inquired the price. The extrao
dinary cheapness raised his suspicion; neverth
less, when he heard the whole story, he was so f
from being discouraged that he was more strongl
inclined to hire it, and, in short, actually did s
When it grew towards evening, he ordered a couc
to be prepared for him in the fore part of th
house, and, after calling for a light, together wit
his pen and tablets, he directed all his people to r
tire. But that his mind might not, for want o
employment, be open to the vain terrors of imag
nary noises and spirits, he applied himself to writin
with the utmost attention. The first part of th
night passed with usual silence, when at length th
chains began to rattle; however, he neither lifte
up his eyes nor laid down his pen, but diverted h
observation by pursuing his studies with greate
earnestness. The noise increased, and advance
nearer, till it seemed at the door, and at last i
the chamber. He looked up and saw the ghost e
actly in the manner it had been described to hin
it stood before him, beckoning with the finge

Athenodorus made a sign with his hand that it should wait a little, and threw his eyes again upon his papers; but the ghost still rattling his chains in his ears, he looked up and saw him beckoning as before. Upon this he immediately arose, and with the light in his hand followed it. The ghost slowly stalked along, as if encumbered with his chains, and, turning into the area of the house, suddenly vanished. Athenodorus, being thus deserted, made a mark with some grass and leaves where the spirit left him. The next day he gave information of this to the magistrates, and advised them to order that spot to be dug up. This was accordingly done, and the skeleton of a man in chains was there found; for the body, having lain a considerable time in the ground, was putrefied and mouldered away from the fetters. The bones, being collected together, were publicly buried, and thus, after the ghost was appeased by the proper ceremonies, the house was haunted no more."[1] This story has such a modern air as to be absolutely disheartening. Are ghosts, then, as incapable of invention as dramatic authors? But the demeanor of Athenodorus has the grand air of the classical period, of one *qui connaît son monde* and the other too, and feels the superiority of a living philosopher to a dead Philistine. How far above all modern armament is his prophylactic against his insubstantial fellow-lodger! Nowadays men take pistols into haunted houses. Sterne, and after him Novalis, discovered that gunpowder made all men equally tall,

[1] Pliny's *Letters*, vii. 27. Melmoth's translation.

but Athenodorus had found out that pen and ink establish a superiority in spiritual stature. As men of this world, we feel our dignity exalted by his keeping an ambassador from the other waiting till he had finished his paragraph. Never surely did authorship appear to greater advantage. Athenodorus seems to have been of Hamlet's mind:

> "I do not set my life at a pin's fee,
> And, for my soul, what can it do to that,
> Being a thing immortal as itself?" [1]

A superstition, as its name imports, is something that has been left to stand over, like unfinished business, from one session of the world's *witenagemot* to the next. The vulgar receive it implicitly on the principle of *omne ignotum pro possibili*, a theory acted on by a much larger number than is commonly supposed, and even the enlightened are too apt to consider it, if not proved, at least rendered probable by the hearsay evidence of popular experience. Particular superstitions are sometimes the embodiment by popular imagination of ideas that were at first mere poetic figments, but more commonly of the degraded and distorted relics of

[1] Something like this is the speech of Don Juan, after the statue of Don Gonzalo has gone out:

> "Pero todas son ideas
> Que da á la imaginacion
> El temor; y temer muertos
> Es muy villano temor.
> Que si un cuerpo noble, vivo,
> Con potencias y razon
> Y con alma no se teme,
> ¿Quién cuerpos muertos temió?"
>
> *El Burlador de Sevilla*, A. iii. s. 15.

religious beliefs. Dethroned gods, outlawed by the new dynasty, haunted the borders of their old dominions, lurking in forests and mountains, and venturing to show themselves only after nightfall. Grimm and others have detected old divinities skulking about in strange disguises, and living from hand to mouth on the charity of Gammer Grethel and Mère l'Oie. Cast out from Olympus and Asgard, they were thankful for the hospitality of the chimney-corner, and kept soul and body together by an illicit traffic between this world and the other. While Schiller was lamenting the Gods of Greece, some of them were nearer neighbors to him than he dreamed; and Heine had the wit to turn them to delightful account, showing himself, perhaps, the wiser of the two in saving what he could from the shipwreck of the past for present use on this prosaic Juan Fernandez of a scientific age, instead of sitting down to bewail it. To make the pagan divinities hateful, they were stigmatized as cacodæmons; and as the human mind finds a pleasure in analogy and system, an infernal hierarchy gradually shaped itself as the convenient antipodes and counterpoise of the celestial one. Perhaps at the bottom of it all there was a kind of unconscious manicheism, and Satan, as Prince of Darkness, or of the Powers of the Air, became at last a sovereign, with his great feudatories and countless vassals, capable of maintaining a not unequal contest with the King of Heaven. He was supposed to have a certain power of bestowing earthly prosperity, but he was really, after all,

nothing better than a James II. at St. Germai who could make Dukes of Perth and confer titu fiefs and garters as much as he liked, without t unpleasant necessity of providing any substa behind the shadow. That there should have be so much loyalty to him, under these dishearteni circumstances, seems to me, on the whole, cre table to poor human nature. In this case it is d at least in part, to that instinct of the poor amo the races of the North, where there was a lo winter, and too often a scanty harvest, — and t poor have been always and everywhere a majori — which made a deity of Wish. The *Acheron movebo* impulse must have been pardonably stro in old women starving with cold and hunger, a fathers with large families and a small winter sto of provision. Especially in the transition peri from the old religion to the new, the temptati must have been great to try one's luck with t discrowned dynasty, when the intruder was d and blind to claims that seemed just enough, long as it was still believed that God persona interfered in the affairs of men. On his dea bed, says Piers Plowman,

> "The poore dare plede and prove by reson
> To have allowance of his lord; by the law he it claimeth;
> . . . . . .
> Thanne may beggaris as beestes after boote waiten
> That al hir lif han lyved in langour and in defaute:
> But God sente hem som tyme som manere joye,
> Outher here or ellis where, kynde wolde it nevere."

He utters the common feeling when he says that were against nature. But when a man has

choice between here and elsewhere, it may be feared that the other world will seem too desperately far away to be waited for when hungry ruin has him in the wind, and the chance on earth is so temptingly near. Hence the notion of a transfer of allegiance from God to Satan, sometimes by a written compact, sometimes with the ceremony by which homage is done to a feudal superior.

Most of the practices of witchcraft, such as the pretence to raise storms, to destroy cattle, to assume the shape of beasts by the use of certain ointments, to induce deadly maladies in men by waxen images, or love by means of charms and philtres, were inheritances from ancient paganism. But the theory of a compact was the product of later times, the result, no doubt, of the efforts of the clergy to inspire a horror of any lapse into heathenish rites by making devils of all the old gods. Christianity may be said to have invented the soul as an individual entity to be saved or lost; and thus grosser wits were led to conceive of it as a piece of property that could be transferred by deed of gift or sale, duly signed, sealed, and witnessed. The earliest legend of the kind is that of Theophilus, chancellor of the church of Adana in Cilicia some time during the sixth century. It is said to have been first written by Eutychianus, who had been a pupil of Theophilus, and who tells the story partly as an eyewitness, partly from the narration of his master. The nun Hroswitha first treated it dramatically in the latter half of the tenth century. Some four hundred years later Rute-

beuf made it the theme of a French miracle-play. His treatment of it is not without a certain poetic merit. Theophilus has been deprived by his bishop of a lucrative office. In his despair he meets with Saladin, *qui parloit au deable quant il voloit.* Saladin tempts him to deny God and devote himself to the Devil, who, in return, will give him back all his old prosperity and more. He at last consents, signs and seals the contract required, and is restored to his old place by the bishop. But now remorse and terror come upon him; he calls on the Virgin, who, after some demur, compels Satan to bring back his deed from the infernal muniment-chest (which must have been fire-proof beyond any skill of our modern safe-makers), and the bishop having read it aloud to the awe-stricken congregation, Theophilus becomes his own man again. In this play, the theory of devilish compact is already complete in all its particulars. The paper must be signed with the blood of the grantor, who does feudal homage (*or joing tes mains, et si devien mes hom*), and engages to eschew good and do evil all the days of his life. The Devil, however, does not imprint any stigma upon his new vassal, as in the later stories of witch-compacts. The following passage from the opening speech of Theophilus will illustrate the conception to which I have alluded of God as a liege lord against whom one might seek revenge on sufficient provocation, — and the only revenge possible was to rob him of a subject by going over to the great Suzerain, his deadly foe: —

"N'est riens que por avoir ne face;
Ne pris riens Dieu ne sa manace.
Irai me je noier ou pendre?
Ie ne m'en puis pas à Dieu prendre,
C'on ne puet à lui avenir.
. . . . . .
Mès il s'est en si haut lieu mis,
Por eschiver ses anemis
C'on n'i puet trere ni lancier.
Se or pooie à lui tancier,
Et combattre et escrimir,
La char li feroie fremir.
Or est là sus en son solaz,
Laz! chetis! et je sui ès laz
De Povreté et de Soufrete." [1]

During the Middle Ages the story became a favorite topic with preachers, while carvings and painted windows tended still further to popularize it, and to render men's minds familiar with the idea which makes the nexus of its plot. The plastic hands of Calderon shaped it into a dramatic poem not surpassed, perhaps hardly equalled, in subtle imaginative quality by any other of modern times.

In proportion as a belief in the possibility of this damnable merchandising with hell became general, accusations of it grew more numerous. Among others, the memory of Pope Sylvester II. was blackened with the charge of having thus bargained away his soul. All learning fell under suspicion, till at length the very grammar itself (the last volume in the world, one would say, to conjure with) gave to English the word *gramary* (enchantment),

[1] *Théatre Français au Moyen Age* (Monmerqué et Michel), pp. 139, 140. Rutebeuf, *Oeuvres*, (Jubinal) ii. 80.

and in French became a book of magic, under t
alias of *Grimoire*. It is not at all unlikely that,
an age when the boundary between actual and p
sible was not very well defined, there were schol
who made experiments in this direction, and sign
contracts, though they never had a chance to co
plete their bargain by an actual delivery. I do n
recall any case of witchcraft in which such a doc
ment was produced in court as evidence against t
accused.[1] Such a one, it is true, was ascribed
Grandier, but was not brought forward at his tri
It should seem that Grandier had been shrew
enough to take a bond to secure the fulfilment
the contract on the other side; for we have t
document in fac-simile, signed and sealed by Luc
fer, Beelzebub, Satan, Elimi, Leviathan, and A
taroth, duly witnessed by Baalberith, Secretary
the Grand Council of Demons. Fancy the con
petition such a state paper as this would arou
at a sale of autographs! Commonly no securit
appears to have been given by the other party t
these arrangements but the bare word of the Devi
which was considered, no doubt, every whit as goo
as his bond. In most cases, indeed, he was th
loser, and showed a want of capacity for affair
equal to that of an average giant of romance
Never was comedy acted over and over with suc

[1] In 1644 (20th April) the grand jury of Middlesex (England found a true bill against one Thomas Browne for that *per quoc dam scriptum gerens datum eisdem die et anno* nequiter diabolice felonice convenit cum malo et impio spiritu &c. The words whic I have italicized seem to imply that the Jury had the documer before them. *Notes and Queries*, 7th S. iv. 521.

sameness of repetition as "The Devil is an Ass." How often must he have exclaimed (laughing in his sleeve as he heard these foolish libels) : —

> "*I* to such blockheads set my wit,
> *I* damn such fools! — go, go, you 're bit!"

In popular legend he is made the victim of some equivocation so gross that any court of equity would have ruled in his favor. On the other hand, if the story had been dressed up by some mediæval Tract Society, the Virgin appears in person at the right moment *ex machina*, and compels him to give up the property he had honestly paid for. One is tempted to ask, Were there no attorneys, then, in the place he came from, of whom he might have taken advice beforehand? On the whole, he had rather hard measure, and it is a wonder he did not throw up the business in disgust. Sometimes, however, he was more lucky, as with the unhappy Dr. Faust; and even so lately as 1695, he came in the shape of a "tall fellow with black beard and periwig, respectable looking and well dressed," about two o'clock in the afternoon, to fly away with the Maréchal de Luxembourg, which, on the stroke of five, he punctually did as per contract, taking with him the window and its stone framing into the bargain. The clothes and wig of the involuntary aeronaut were, in the handsomest manner, left upon the bed, as not included in the bill of sale. In this case also we have a copy of the articles of agreement, twenty-eight in number, by the last of which the Maréchal renounces God and devotes himself to the enemy. This clause, sometimes the only one,

always the most important in such compacts, seems to show that they first took shape in the imagination, while the struggle between Paganism and Christianity was still going on. As the converted heathen was made to renounce his false gods, none the less real for being false, so the renegade Christian must forswear the true Deity. It is very likely, however, that the whole thing may be more modern than the assumed date of Theophilus would imply, and if so, the idea of feudal allegiance gave the first hint, as it certainly modified the particulars, of the ceremonial.

This notion of a personal and private treaty with the Evil One has something of dignity about it that has made it perennially attractive to the most imaginative minds. It rather flatters than mocks our feeling of the dignity of man. As we come down to the vulgar parody of it in the confessions of wretched old women on the rack, our pity and indignation are mingled with disgust. One of the most particular of these confessions is that of Abel de la Rue, convicted in 1584. The accused was a novice in the Franciscan Convent at Meaux. Having been punished by the master of the novices for stealing some apples and nuts in the convent garden, the Devil appeared to him in the shape of a black dog, promising him his protection, and advising him to leave the convent.[1] Not long after,

[1] It is hard to conceive in what language they communicated with each other unless it were Dog-Latin. It is interesting to note, however, that beasts were still deemed as capable of speech on occasion as in the days of Æsop.

going into the sacristy, he saw a large volume fastened by a chain, and further secured by bars of iron. The name of this book was *Grimoire.* Thrusting his hands through the bars, he contrived to open it, and having read a sentence (which Bodin carefully suppresses), there suddenly appeared to him a man of middle stature, with a pale and very frightful countenance, clad in a long black robe of the Italian fashion, and with faces of men like his own on his breast and knees. As for his feet they were like those of cows. He could not have been the most agreeable of companions, *ayant le corps et haleine puante.* This man told him not to be afraid, to take off his habit, to put faith in him, and he would give him whatever he asked. Then laying hold of him below the arms, the unknown transported him under the gallows of Meaux, and then said to him with a trembling and broken voice, and having a visage as pale as that of a man who has been hanged, and a very stinking breath, that he should fear nothing, but have entire confidence in him, that he should never want for anything, that his own name was Maître Rigoux, and that he would like to be his master; to which De la Rue made answer that he would do whatever he commanded, and that he wished to be gone from the Franciscans. Thereupon Rigoux disappeared, but returning between seven and eight in the evening, took him round the waist and carried him back to the sacristy, promising to come again for him the next day. This he accordingly did, and told De la Rue to take off his habit, get him gone from

the convent, and meet him near a great tree on the high-road from Meaux to Vaulx-Courtois. Rigoux met him there and took him to a certain Maître Pierre, who, after a few words exchanged in an undertone with Rigoux, sent De la Rue to the stable, after his return whence he saw no more of Rigoux. Thereupon Pierre and his wife made him good cheer, telling him that for the love of Maître Rigoux they would treat him well, and that he must obey the said Rigoux, which he promised to do. About two months after, Maître Pierre, who commonly took him to the fields to watch cattle, said to him there that they must go to the Assembly, because he (Pierre) was out of powders, to which he made answer that he was willing. Three days later, about Christmas eve, 1575, Pierre having sent his wife to sleep out of the house, set a long branch of broom in the chimney-corner, and bade De la Rue go to bed, but not to sleep. About eleven they heard a great noise as of an impetuous wind and thunder in the chimney: which hearing, Maître Pierre told him to dress himself, for it was time to be gone. Then Pierre took some grease from a little box and anointed himself under the arm-pits, and De la Rue on the palms of his hands, which incontinently felt as if on fire, and the said grease stank like a cat three weeks or a month dead. Then, Pierre and he bestriding the branch, Maître Rigoux took it by the butt and drew it up chimney as if the wind had lifted them. And, the night being dark, he saw suddenly a torch before them lighting them, and Maître Rigoux was gone

unless he had changed himself into the said torch. Arrived at a grassy place some five leagues from Vaulx-Courtois, they found a company of some sixty people of all ages, none of whom he knew, except a certain Pierre of Dampmartin and an old woman who was executed, as he had heard, about five years ago for sorcery at Lagny. Then suddenly he noticed that all (except Rigoux, who was clad as before) were dressed in linen, though they had not changed their clothes. Then, at command of the eldest among them, who seemed about eighty years old, with a white beard and almost wholly bald, each swept the place in front of himself with his broom. Thereupon Rigoux changed into a great he-goat, black and stinking, around whom they all danced backward with their faces outward and their backs towards the goat. They danced about half an hour, and then his master told him they must adore the goat who was the Devil, *et, ce fait et dict, veit que ledict Bouc courba ses deux pieds de deuant et leua son cul en haut, et lors que certaines menues graines grosses comme testes d'espingles, qui se conuertissoient en poudres fort puantes, sentant le soulphre et poudre a canon et chair puant meslees ensemble seroient tombees sur plusieurs drappeaux en sept doubles.* Then the oldest, and so the rest in order, went forward on their knees and gathered up their cloths with the powders, but first each *se seroit incliné vers le Diable et iceluy baise en la partie honteuse de son corps.* They went home on their broom, lighted as before. De la Rue confessed also that he was at another

assembly on the eve of St. John Baptist.[1] With the powders they could cause the death of men against whom they had a spite, or of their cattle.[2] Rigoux before long began to tempt him to drown himself, and, though he lay down, yet rolled him some distance towards the river. It is plain that the poor fellow was mad, or half-witted, or both. And yet Bodin, the author of the *De Republica*, reckoned one of the ablest books of that age, believed all this filthy nonsense, and prefixes it to his *Demonomanie*, as proof conclusive of the existence of sorcerers.

This was in 1587. Just a century later, Glanvil, one of the most eminent men of his day, and Henry More, the Platonist, whose memory is still dear to the lovers of an imaginative mysticism, were perfectly satisfied with evidence like that which follows. Elizabeth Styles confessed, in 1664, "that the Devil about ten years since appeared to her in the Shape of a handsome Man, and after of a black Dog. That he promised her Money, and that she should live gallantly, and have the Pleasure of the World for twelve Years, if she would with her Blood sign his Paper, which was to give her Soul to him and observe his Laws and that he might suck her Blood. This after four Solicitations, the Examinant promised him to do. Upon

[1] The dates (Christmas and St. John Baptist) are noteworthy as being those of pagan festivals which the Church had mediatized.

[2] For these crimes a regular fee was sometimes paid: *quand le sorcier donne un malefice à mort, le Diable leur [lui] donne huict sols six deniers, et à un animal la moitié.* (*Variétés Historiques et Littéraires.* T. v. 203.)

which he pricked the fourth Finger of her right Hand, between the middle and upper Joynt (where the Sign at the Examination remained) and with a Drop or two of her Blood, she signed the Paper with an O. Upon this the Devil gave her sixpence and vanished with the Paper. That since he hath appeared to her in the Shape of a *Man*, and did so on *Wednesday* seven-night past, but more usually he appears in the Likeness of a *Dog*, and *Cat*, and a *Fly* like a Millar, in which last he usually sucks in the Poll about four of the Clock in the Morning, and did so *Jan.* 27, and that it is Pain to her to be so suckt. That when she hath a Desire to do Harm she calls the Spirit by the name of *Robin*,[1] to whom, when he appeareth, she useth these Words, *O Sathan, give me my Purpose.* She then tells him what she would have done. And that he should so appear to her was Part of her Contract with him." The Devil in this case appeared as a black (dark-complexioned) man " in black clothes, with a little band," — a very clerical-looking personage. " Before they are carried to their Meetings they anoint their Foreheads and Hand-Wrists with an Oyl the Spirit brings them (which smells raw) and then they are carried in a very short Time, using these Words as they pass, *Thout, tout a tout, throughout and about.* And when they go off from their Meetings they say, *Rentum, Tormentum.* That at every meeting before the Spirit vanisheth away, he appoints the next Meeting Place and Time, and at his Departure there is a foul Smell. At their

[1] There seems to be a reminiscence of Robin Goodfellow here.

Meeting they have usually Wine or good Beer, Cakes, Meat or the like. They eat and drink really when they meet, in their Bodies, dance also and have some Musick. The Man in black sits at the higher End, and *Anne Bishop* usually next him. He useth some Words before Meat, and none after; his Voice is audible but very low. The Man in black sometimes plays on a Pipe or Cittern, and the Company dance. At last the Devil vanisheth, and all are carried to their several Homes in a short Space. At their parting they say, *A Boy! merry meet, merry part!*" Alice Duke confessed "that Anne Bishop persuaded her to go with her into the Churchyard in the Night-time, and being come thither, to go backward round the Church, which they did three times. In their first Round they met a Man in black Cloths who went round the second time with them; and then they met a Thing in the Shape of a great black Toad which leapt up against the Examinant's Apron. In their third Round they met somewhat in the Shape of a Rat, which vanished away." She also received sixpence from the Devil, and "her Familiar did commonly suck her right Breast about seven at Night in the Shape of a little Cat of a dunnish Colour, which is as smooth as a Want [mole], and when she is suckt, she is in a Kind of Trance." Poor Christian Green got only fourpence half-penny for her soul, but her bargain was made some years later than that of the others, and quotations, as the stock-brokers would say, ranged lower. Her familiar took the shape of a hedge-

hog. Julian Cox confessed that "she had been often tempted by the Devil to be a Witch, but never consented. That one Evening she walkt about a Mile from her own House and there came riding towards her three Persons upon three Broom-staves, born up about a Yard and a half from the Ground. Two of them she formerly knew, which was a Witch and a Wizzard that were hanged for Witchcraft several years before. The third Person she knew not. He came in the Shape of a black Man, and tempted her to give him her Soul, or to that Effect, and to express it by pricking her Finger and giving her Name in her Blood in Token of it." On her trial Judge Archer told the jury, "he had heard that a Witch could not repeat that Petition in the Lord's Prayer, viz. *And lead us not into Temptation*, and having this Occasion, he would try the Experiment." The jury "were not in the least Measure to guide their Verdict according to it, because it was not legal Evidence." Accordingly it was found that the poor old trot could say only, *Lead us into temptation*, or *Lead us not into no temptation*. Probably she used the latter form first, and, finding she had blundered, corrected herself by leaving out both the negatives. The old English double negation seems never to have been heard of by the court. Janet Douglass, a pretended dumb girl, by whose contrivance five persons had been burned at Paisley, in 1677, for having caused the sickness of Sir George Maxwell by means of waxen and other images, having recovered her speech shortly after, declared that she

"had some smattering knowledge of the Lord's prayer, which she had heard the witches repeat, it seems, by her vision, in the presence of the Devil; and at his desire, which they observed, they added to the word *art* the letter *w*, which made it run, 'Our Father which wart in heaven,' by which means the Devil made the application of the prayer to himself." She also showed on the arm of a woman named Campbell "an *invisible* mark which she had gotten from the Devil." The wife of one Barton confessed that she had engaged "in the Devil's service. She renounced her baptism, and did prostrate her body to the foul spirit, and received his mark, and got a new name from him, and was called *Margaratus*. She was asked if she ever had any pleasure in his company? 'Never much,' says she, 'but one night going to a dancing upon Pentland Hills, in the likeness of a rough tanny [tawny] dog, playing on a pair of pipes; the spring he played,' says she, 'was *The silly bit chicken, gar cast it a pickle, and it will grow meikle.*'"[1] In 1670, more than sixty of both sexes, among them fifteen children, were executed for witchcraft at the village of Mohra in Sweden. Thirty-six children, between the ages of nine and sixteen, were sentenced to be scourged with rods on the palms of their hands, once a week for a year. The evidence in this case against the accused seems to have been mostly that of children. "Being asked

[1] "There sat Auld Nick in shape o' beast,
A towzy tyke, black, grim, an' large,
To gie them music was his charge."

whether they were sure that they were at any time carried away by the Devil, they all declared they were, begging of the Commissioners that they might be freed from that intolerable slavery." They "used to go to a Gravel-pit which lay hardby a Cross-way and there they put on a Vest over their Heads, and then danced round, and after ran to the Cross-way and called the Devil thrice, first with a still Voice, the second time somewhat louder, and the third time very loud, with these Words, *Antecessour, come and carry us to Blockula.* Whereupon immediately he used to appear, but in different Habits; but for the most Part they saw him in a gray Coat and red and blue Stockings. He had a red Beard, a highcrowned Hat, with Linnen of divers Colours wrapt about it, and long Garters upon his Stockings." "They must procure some Scrapings of Altars and Filings of Church-Clocks [bells], and he gives them a Horn with some Salve in it wherewith they do anoint themselves." "Being asked whether they were sure of a real personal Transportation, and whether they were awake when it was done, they all answered in the Affirmative, and that the Devil sometimes laid Something down in the Place that was very like them. But one of them confessed that he did only take away her Strength, and her Body lay still upon the Ground. Yet sometimes he took even her Body with him." "Till of late they never had that Power to carry away Children, but only this Year and the last, and the Devil did at this Time force them to it. That heretofore it was sufficient to carry but one of their

Children or a Stranger's Child, which yet happened seldom, but now he did plague them and whip them if they did not procure him Children, insomuch that they had no Peace or Quiet for him; and whereas formerly one Journey a Week would serve their Turn from their own Town to the Place aforesaid, now they were forced to run to other Towns and Places for Children, and that they brought with them some fifteen, some sixteen Children every night. For their Journey they made use of all sorts of Instruments, of Beasts, of Men, of Spits, and Posts, according as they had Opportunity. If they do ride upon Goats and have many Children with them," they have a way of lengthening the Goat with a Spit, "and then are anointed with the aforesaid Ointment. A little Girl of Elfdale confessed, that, naming the Name of JESUS, as she was carried away, she fell suddenly upon the Ground and got a great Hole in her Side, which the Devil presently healed up again. The first Thing they must do at Blockula was that they must deny all and devote themselves Body and Soul to the Devil, and promise to serve him faithfully, and confirm all this with an Oath. Hereupon they cut their Fingers, and with their Bloud writ their Name in his Book. He caused them to be baptized by such Priests as he had there and made them confirm their Baptism with dreadful Oaths and Imprecations. Hereupon the Devil gave them a Purse, wherein their Filings of Clocks [bells], with a Stone tied to it, which they threw into the Water, and then they were forced to speak these Words:

As these Filings of the Clock do never return to the Clock from which they are taken, so may my Soul never return to Heaven. The Diet they did use to have there was Broth with Colworts and Bacon in it, Oatmeal-Bread spread with Butter, Milk, and Cheese. Sometimes it tasted very well, sometimes very ill. After Meals, they went to Dancing, and in the mean while swore and cursed most dreadfully, and afterward went to fighting one with another. The Devil had Sons and Daughters by them, which he did marry together, and they did couple and brought forth Toads and Serpents. If he hath a Mind to be merry with them, he lets them all ride upon Spits before him, takes afterwards the Spits and beats them black and blue, and then laughs at them. They had seen sometimes a very great Devil like a Dragon, with Fire about him and bound with an Iron Chain, and the Devil that converses with them tells them that, if they confess Anything, he will let that great Devil loose upon them, whereby all *Sweedland* shall come into great Danger. The Devil taught them to milk, which was in this wise: they used to stick a Knife in the Wall and hang a Kind of Label on it, which they drew and stroaked, and as long as this lasted the Persons that they had Power over were miserably plagued, and the Beasts were milked that Way till sometimes they died of it. The minister of Elfdale declared that one Night these Witches were to his thinking upon the Crown of his Head and that from thence he had had a long-continued Pain of the Head. One of the Witches confessed, too,

that the Devil had sent her to torment the Minister, and that she was ordered to use a Nail and strike it into his Head, but it would not enter very deep. They confessed also that the Devil gives them a Beast about the Bigness and Shape of a young Cat, which they call a *Carrier*, and that he gives them a Bird too as big as a Raven, but white. And these two Creatures they can send anywhere, and wherever they come they take away all Sorts of Victuals they can get. What the Bird brings they may keep for themselves; but what the Carrier brings they must reserve for the Devil. The Lords Commissioners were indeed very earnest and took great Pains to persuade them to show some of their Tricks, but to no Purpose; for they did all unanimously confess, that, since they had confessed all, they found that all their Witchcraft was gone, and that the Devil at this time appeared to them very terrible with Claws on his Hands and Feet, and with Horns on his Head and a long Tail behind." At Blockula "the Devil had a Church, such another as in the town of Mohra. When the Commissioners were coming, he told the Witches they should not fear them, for he would certainly kill them all. And they confessed that some of them had attempted to murther the Commissioners, but had not been able to effect it."

In these confessions we find included nearly all the particulars of the popular belief concerning witchcraft, and see the gradual degradation of the once superb Lucifer to the vulgar scarecrow with horns and tail. "The Prince of Darkness *was* a

gentleman." From him who had not lost all his original brightness, to this dirty fellow who leaves a stench, sometimes of brimstone, behind him, the descent is a long one. For the dispersion of this foul odor Dr. Henry More gives an odd reason. "The Devil also, as in other stories, leaving an ill smell behind him, seems to imply the reality of the business, those adscititious particles he held together in his visible vehicle being loosened at his vanishing and so offending the nostrils by their floating and diffusing themselves in the open Air." In all the stories vestiges of Paganism are not indistinct. The three principal witch gatherings of the year were held on the days of great pagan festivals, which were afterwards adopted by the Church. Maury supposes the witches' Sabbath to be derived from the rites of Bacchus Sabazius, and accounts in this way for the Devil's taking the shape of a he-goat. But the name was more likely to be given from hatred of the Jews, and the goat may have a much less remote origin. Bodin assumes the identity of the Devil with Pan, and in the popular mythology both of Kelts and Teutons there were certain hairy wood-demons called by the former *Dus* and by the latter *Scrat*. Our common names of *Deuse* and *Old Scratch* are plainly derived from these, and possibly *Old Harry* is a corruption of *Old Hairy*. By Latinization they became Satyrs. Here, at any rate, is the source of the cloven hoof. The belief in the Devil's appearing to his worshippers as a goat is very old. Possibly the fact that this animal was sacred to Thor,

the god of thunder, may explain it. Certain it is that the traditions of Vulcan, Thor, and Wayland[1] converged at last in Satan. Like Vulcan, he was hurled from heaven, and like him he still limps across the stage in Mephistopheles, though without knowing why. In Germany, he has a horse's and not a cloven foot,[2] because the horse was a frequent pagan sacrifice, and therefore associated with devil-worship under the new dispensation. Hence the horror of hippophagy which some French gastronomes are striving to overcome. Everybody who has read "Tom Brown," or Wordsworth's Sonnet on a German stove, remembers the Saxon horse sacred to Woden. The raven was also his peculiar bird, and Grimm is inclined to think this the reason why the witch's familiar appears so often in that shape. It is true that our *Old Nick* is derived from *Nikkar*, one of the titles of that divinity, but the association of the Evil One with the raven is older, and most probably owing to the ill-omened character of the bird itself. Already in the apocryphal gospel of the "Infancy," the demoniac Son of the Chief Priest puts on his head one of the swaddling-clothes of Christ which Mary has hung out to dry, and forthwith "the devils began to come out of his mouth and to fly away as *crows* and serpents."

It will be noticed that the witches underwent a form of baptism. As the system gradually perfected itself among the least imaginative of men,

[1] Hence, perhaps, the name Valant applied to the Devil, about the origin of which Grimm is in doubt.

[2] One foot of the Greek Empusa was an ass's hoof.

as the superstitious are apt to be, they could do nothing better than describe Satan's world as in all respects the reverse of that which had been conceived by the orthodox intellect as Divine. Have you an illustrated Bible of the last century? Very good. Turn it upside down, and you find the prints on the whole about as near nature as ever, and yet pretending to be something new by a simple device that saves the fancy a good deal of trouble. For, while it is true that the poetic fancy plays, yet the faculty which goes by that pseudonyme in prosaic minds (and it was by such that the details of this Satanic commerce were pieced together) is hard put to it for invention, and only too thankful for any labor-saving contrivance whatsoever. Accordingly, all it need take the trouble to do was to reverse the ideas of sacred things already engraved on its surface, and behold, a kingdom of hell with all the merit and none of the difficulty of originality! "Uti olim Deus populo suo Hierosolymis Synagogas erexit ut in iis ignarus legis divinæ populus erudiretur, voluntatemque Dei placitam ex verbo in iis prædicato hauriret; ita et Diabolus in omnibus omnino suis actionibus simiam Dei agens, gregi suo acherontico conventus et synagogas, quas satanica sabbata vocant, indicit. . . . Atque de hisce Conventibus et Synagogis Lamiarum nullus Autorum quos quidem evolvi, imo nec ipse Lamiarum Patronus [here he glances at Wierus] scilicet ne dubiolum quidem movit. Adeo ut tuto affirmari liceat conventus a diabolo certo institui. Quos vel ipse, tanquam præses collegii, vel per dæmonem,

qui ad cujuslibet sagæ custodiam constitutus est, . . . vel per alios Magos aut sagas per unum aut duos dies antequam fiat congregatio denunciat. . . . Loci in quibus solent a dæmone cœtus et conventicula malefica institui plerumque sunt sylvestres, occulti, subterranei, et ab hominum conversatione remoti. . . . Evocatæ hoc modo et tempore Lamiæ, . . . dæmon illis persuadet eas non posse conventiculis interesse nisi nudum corpus unguento ex corpusculis infantum ante baptismum necatorum præparato illinant, idque propterea solum illis persuadet ut ad quam plurimas infantum insontium cædes eas alliciat. . . . Unctionis ritu peracto, abiturientes, ne forte a maritis in lectis desiderantur, vel per incantationem somnum, aurem nimirum vellicando dextra manu prius prædicto unguine illita, conciliant maritis ex quo non facile possunt excitari; vel dæmones personas quasdam dormientibus adumbrant, quas, si contigeret expergisci, suas uxores esse putarent; vel interea alius dæmon in forma succubi ad latus maritorum adjungitur qui loco uxoris est. . . . Et ita sine omni remora insidentes baculo, furcæ, scopis, aut arundini vel tauro, equo, sui, hirco, aut cani, *quorum omnium exempla prodidit Remig.* L. I. c. 14, devehuntur a dæmone ad loca destinata. . . . Ibi dæmon præses conventus in solio sedet magnifico, forma terrifica, ut plurimum hirci vel canis. Ad quem advenientes viri juxta ac mulieres accedunt reverentiæ exhibendæ et adorandi gratia, non tamen uno eodemque modo. Interdum complicatis genubus supplices; interdum obverso incedentes tergo et

modo retrogrado, in oppositum directo illi reverentiæ quam nos præstare solemus. In signum homagii (sit honor castis auribus) Principem suum hircum in [obscænissimo quodam corporis loco] summa cum reverentia sacrilego ore osculantur. Quo facto, sacrificia dæmoni faciunt multis modis.[1] Sæpe liberos suos ipsi offerunt. Sæpe communione sumpta benedictam hostiam in ore asservatam et extractam (horreo dicere) dæmoni oblatam coram eo pede conculcant. His et similibus flagitiis et abominationibus execrandis commissis, incipiunt mensis assidere et convivari de cibis insipidis, insulsis,[2] furtivis, quos dæmon suppeditat, vel quos singulæ attulere, interdum tripudiant ante convivium, interdum post illud. . . . Nec mensæ sua deest benedictio cœtu hoc digna, verbis constans plane blasphemis quibus ipsum Beelzebub et creatorem et datorem et conservatorem omnium profitentur. Eadem sententia est gratiarum actionis. Post convivium, dorsis invicem obversis . . . choreas ducere et cantare fescenninos in honorem dæmonis obscænissimos, vel ad tympanum fistulamve sedentis alicujus in bifida arbore saltare . . . tum suis amasiis dæmonibus fœdissime commisceri. Ultimo pulveribus (quos aliqui scribunt esse cineres hirci illis quem dæmon assumpserat et quem adorant subito coram illius flamma absumpti) vel venenis aliis acceptis, sæpe etiam cuique indicto nocendi penso, et pronunciato Pseudothei dæmonis

[1] In a French case I find the incongruous sacrifice of a turtle dove. Perhaps in mockery of the symbol of the Holy Ghost?

[2] Salt was forbidden at these witch-feasts.

decreto, ULCISCAMINI VOS, ALIOQUI MORIEMINI. Duabus aut tribus horis in hisce ludis exactis circa Gallicinium dæmon convivas suas dimittit."[1] Sometimes they were baptized anew. Sometimes they renounced the Virgin, whom they called in their rites *extensam mulierem*. If the Ave Mary bell should ring while the demon is conveying home his witch, he lets her drop. In the confession of Agnes Simpson the meeting place was North Berwick Kirk. "The Devil started up himself in the pulpit, like a meikle black man, and calling the row [roll] every one answered, *Here*. At his command they opened up three graves and cutted off from the dead corpses the joints of their fingers, toes, and nose, and parted them amongst them, and the said Agnes Simpson got for her part a winding-sheet and two joints. The Devil commanded them to keep the joints upon them while [till] they were dry, and then to make a powder of them to do evil withal." This confession is sadly memorable, for it was made before James I., then king of Scots, and is said to have convinced him of the reality of witchcraft. Hence the act passed in the first year of his reign in England, and not repealed till 1736, under which, perhaps in consequence of which, so many suffered.

The notion of these witch-gatherings was first suggested, there can be little doubt, by secret conventicles of persisting or relapsed pagans, or of heretics. Both, perhaps, contributed their share. Sometimes a mountain, as in Germany the Blocks-

[1] De Lamiis, p. 59 *et seq.*

berg,[1] sometimes a conspicuous oak or linden, and there were many such among both Gauls and Germans sacred of old to pagan rites, and later a lonely heath, a place where two roads crossed each other, a cavern, gravel-pit, or quarry, the gallows, or the churchyard, was the place appointed for their diabolic orgies. That the witch could be conveyed bodily to these meetings was at first admitted without any question. But as the husbands of accused persons sometimes testified that their wives had not left their beds on the alleged night of meeting, the witchmongers were put to strange shifts by way of accounting for it. Sometimes the Devil imposed on the husband by a *deceptio visus;* sometimes a demon took the place of the wife; sometimes the body was left and the spirit only transported. But the more orthodox opinion was in favor of corporeal deportation. Bodin appeals triumphantly to the cases of Habbakuk (now in the Apocrypha, but once making a part of the Book of Daniel), and of Philip in the Acts of the Apostles. "I find," he says, "this ecstatic ravishment they talk of much more wonderful than bodily transport. And if the Devil has this power,

[1] If the *Blockula* of the Swedish witches be a reminiscence of this, it would seem to point back to remote times and heathen ceremonies. But it is so impossible to distinguish what was put into the mind of those who confessed by their examining torturers from what may have been there before, the result of a common superstition, that perhaps, after all, the meeting on mountains may have been suggested by what Pliny says of the dances of Satyrs on Mount Atlas. It is suggested that the scene of the Swedish delusion should have been *Elf*dale, and in one of the Scottish narratives the Devil's name is *Elpha*.

as they confess, of ravishing the spirit out of the body, is it not more easy to carry body and soul without separation or division of the reasonable part, than to withdraw and divide the one from the other without death?" The author of *De Lamiis* argues for the corporeal theory. "The evil Angels have the same superiority of natural power as the good, since by the Fall they lost none of the gifts of nature, but only those of grace." Now, as we know that good angels can thus transport men in the twinkling of an eye, it follows that evil ones may do the same. He fortifies his position by a recent example from secular history. "No one doubts about John Faust, who dwelt at Wittenberg, in the time of the sainted Luther, and who, seating himself on his cloak with his companions, was conveyed away and borne by the Devil through the air to distant kingdoms." [1] Glanvil inclines rather to the spiritual than the material hypothesis, and suggests "that the Witch's anointing herself before she takes her flight may perhaps serve to keep the body tenantable and in fit disposition to receive the spirit at its return." Aubrey, whose "Miscellanies" were published in 1696, had no doubts whatever as to the physical asportation of the witch. He says that a gentleman of his acquaintance "was in Portugal *anno* 1655, when one was burnt by the inquisition for being brought thither from Goa, in East India, in the air, in an

[1] Wierus, whose book was published not long after Faust's death, apparently doubted the whole story, for he alludes to it with an *ut fertur*, and plainly looked on him as a mountebank.

incredible short time." And we have the case of *un Anglois francisé* who was let fall by the Devil into the Channel *avec un bruict espovantable fait en la presence de deux cens navires Hollandois.* As to the conveyance of witches through crevices, keyholes, chimneys, and the like, Herr Walburger discusses the question with such comical gravity that we must give his argument in the undiminished splendor of its jurisconsult latinity. The first sentence is worthy of Magister Bartholomæus Kuckuk. "Hæc realis delatio trahit me quoque ad illam vulgo agitatam quæstionem: *An diabolus Lamias corpore per angusta foramina parietum, fenestrarum, portarum aut per cavernas igniſluas ferre queant?*" (Surely if *tace* be good Latin for a candle, *caverna igniſlua* should be flattering to a chimney.) "Resp. Lamiæ prædicto modo sæpius fatentur sese a diabolo per caminum aut alia loca angustiora scopis insidentes per aerem ad montem Bructerorum deferri. Verum deluduntur a Satana istæc mulieres hoc casu egregie nec revera rimulas istas penetrant, sed solummodo dæmon præcedens latenter aperit et claudit januas vel fenestras corporis earum capaces, per quas eas intromittit quæ putant se formam animalculi parvi, mustelæ, catti, locustæ, et aliorum induisse. At si forte contingat ut per parietem se delatam confiteatur Saga, tunc, si non totum hoc præstigiosum est, dæmonem tamen maxima celeritate tot quot sufficiunt lapides eximere et sustinere alios ne ruant, et postea eadem celeritate iterum eos in suum locum reponere, existimo: cum hominum adspectus hanc tartarei latomi fraudem

nequeat deprendere. Idem quoque judicium esse potest de translatione per caminum. Siquidem si caverna igniflua justæ amplitudinis est ut nullo impedimento et hæsitatione corpus humanum eam perrepere possit, diabolo impossibile non esse per eam eas educere. Si vero per inproportionatum (ut ita loquar) corporibus spatium eas educit tunc meras illusiones præstigiosas esse censeo, nec a diabolo hoc unquam effici posse. Ratio est, quoniam diabolus essentiam creaturæ seu lamiæ immutare non potest, multo minus efficere ut majus corpus penetret per spatium inproportionatum, alioquin corporum penetratio esset admittenda quod contra naturam et omne Physicorum principium est." This is fine reasoning, and the *ut ita loquar* thrown in so carelessly, as if with a deprecatory wave of the hand for using a less classical locution than usual, strikes me as a very delicate touch indeed. Walburger wrote this in 1757.

Grimm tells us that he does not know when broomsticks, spits, and similar utensils were first assumed to be the canonical instruments of this nocturnal equitation. He thinks it comparatively modern, but I suspect it is as old as the first child that ever bestrode his father's staff, and fancied it into a courser shod with wind, like those of Pindar. Alas for the poverty of human invention! It cannot afford a hippogriff for an every-day occasion. The poor old crones, badgered by inquisitors into confessing they had been where they never were, were involved in the further necessity of explaining how the devil they got there. The only steed their

parents had ever been rich enough to keep had been of this domestic sort, and they no doubt had ridden in this inexpensive fashion, imagining themselves the grand dames they saw sometimes flash by, in the happy days of childhood, now so far away. Forced to give a *how*, and unable to conceive of mounting in the air without something to sustain them, their bewildered wits naturally took refuge in some such simple subterfuge, and the broomstave, which might make part of the poorest house's furniture, was the nearest at hand. If youth and good spirits could put such life into a dead stick once, why not age and evil spirits now? Moreover, what so likely as an *emeritus* implement of this sort to become the staff of a withered beldame, and thus to be naturally associated with her image? I remember very well a poor half-crazed creature, who always wore a scarlet cloak and leaned on such a stay, cursing and banning after a fashion that would infallibly have burned her two hundred years ago. But apart from any adventitious associations of later growth, it is certain that a very ancient belief gave to magic the power of imparting life, or the semblance of it, to inanimate things and thus sometimes making servants of them. The wands of the Egyptian magicians were turned to serpents. Still nearer to the purpose is the capital story of Lucian, out of which Goethe made his *Zauberlehrling*, of the stick turned water-carrier. The classical theory of the witch's flight was driven to no such vulgar expedients, the ointment turning her into a bird for the nonce, as in Lucian and

Apuleius. In those days, too, there was nothing known of any camp-meeting of witches and wizards, but each sorceress transformed herself that she might fly to her paramour. According to some of the Scotch stories, the witch, after bestriding her broomstick, must repeat the magic formula, *Horse and Hattock!* The flitting of these ill-omened night-birds, like nearly all the general superstitions relating to witchcraft, mingles itself and is lost in a throng of figures more august.[1] Diana, Bertha, Holda, Abundia, Befana, once beautiful and divine, the bringers of blessing while men slept, became demons haunting the drear of darkness with terror and ominous suggestion. The process of disenchantment must have been a long one, and none can say how soon it became complete. Perhaps we may take Heine's word for it, that

> "Genau bei Weibern
> Weiss man niemals wo der Engel
> Aufhört und der Teufel anfängt."

Once goblinized, Herodias joins them, doomed still to bear about the Baptist's head;[2] and Woden, who, first losing his identity in the Wild Huntsman, sinks by degrees into the mere *spook* of a Suabian baron, sinfully fond of field-sports, and therefore punished with an eternal phantasm of them, "the hunter and the deer a shade." More and more vulgarized, the infernal train snatches up and sweeps along with it every lawless shape and wild conjecture of distempered fancy, streaming

[1] See Grimm's D. M., under *Hexenfart*, *Wütendes Heer*, &c.

[2] Probably through some confusion with Eurydice, whose name became *Erodes* in Old French.

away at last into a comet's tail of wild-haired hags, eager with unnatural hate and more unnatural lust, the nightmare breed of some exorcist's or inquisitor's surfeit, whose own lie has turned upon him in sleep.

As it is painfully interesting to trace the gradual degeneration of a poetic faith into the ritual of unimaginative Philistinism, so it is amusing to see pedantry clinging faithfully to the traditions of its prosaic nature, and holding sacred the dead shells that once housed a moral symbol. What a divine thing the *out*side always has been and continues to be! And how the cast clothes of the mind continue always to be in fashion! We turn our coats without changing the cut of them. But was it possible for a man to change not only his skin but his nature? Were there such things as *versipelles*, *lycanthropi*, *werwolfs*, and *loupgarous?* In the earliest ages science was poetry, as in the later poetry has become science. The phenomena of nature, imaginatively represented, were not long in becoming myths. These the primal poets reproduced again as symbols, no longer of physical, but of moral truths. By and by the professional poets, in search of a subject, are struck by the fund of picturesque material lying unused in them, and work them up once more as narratives, with appropriate personages and decorations. Thence they take the further downward step into legend, and from that to superstition. How many metamorphoses between the elder Edda and the Nibelungen, between Arcturus and the "Idyls of the King"!

Let a good, thorough-paced proser get hold of one of these stories, and he carefully desiccates them of whatever fancy may be left, till he has reduced them to the proper dryness of fact. King Lycaon, grandson by the spindleside of Oceanus, after passing through all the stages I have mentioned, becomes the ancestor of the werwolf. Ovid is put upon the stand as a witness, and testifies to the undoubted fact of the poor monarch's own metamorphosis: —

> "Territus ipse fugit, nactusque silentia ruris
> Exululat, frustraque loqui conatur."

Does any one still doubt that men may be changed into beasts? Call Lucian, call Apuleius, call Homer, whose story of the companions of Ulysses made swine of by Circe, says Bodin, *n'est pas fable*. If that arch-patron of sorcerers, Wierus, is still unconvinced, and pronounces the whole thing a delusion of diseased imagination, what does he say to Nebuchadnezzar? Nay, let St. Austin be subpœnaed, who declares that "in his time among the Alps sorceresses were common, who, by making travellers eat of a certain cheese, changed them into beasts of burden and then back again into men." Too confiding tourist, beware of *Gruyère*, especially at supper! Then there was the Philosopher Ammonius, whose lectures were constantly attended by an ass, — a phenomenon not without parallel in more recent times, and all the more credible to Bodin, who had been professor of civil law.

In one case we have fortunately the evidence of

the ass himself. In Germany, two witches who kept an inn made an ass of a young actor, — not always a very prodigious transformation, it will be thought by those familiar with the stage. In his new shape he drew customers by his amusing tricks, *voluptates mille viatoribus exhibebat.* But one day making his escape (having overheard the secret from his mistresses), he plunged into the water and was disasinized to the extent of recovering his original shape.[1] "Id Petrus Damianus, vir sua ætate inter primos numerandus, cum rem sciscitatus est diligentissime ex hero, *ex asino*, ex mulieribus sagis confessis factum, Leoni VII. Papæ narravit, et postquam diu in utramque partem coram Papa fuit disputatum, hoc tandem posse fieri fuit constitum." Bodin must have been delighted with this story, though perhaps as a Protestant he might have vilipended the infallible decision of the Pope in its favor. As for lycanthropy, that was too common in his own time to need any confirmation. It was notorious to all men. "In Livonia, during the latter part of December, a villain goes about summoning the sorcerers to meet at a certain place, and if they fail, the Devil scourges them thither with an iron rod, and that so sharply that the marks of it remain upon them. Their captain goes before; and they, to the number of several thousands, follow him across a river, which passed, they change into wolves, and, casting themselves upon men and flocks, do all manner of damage." This we have on the authority of Melanc-

[1] This is plainly a reminiscence of Apuleius.

thon's son-in-law, Gaspar Peucerus. Moreover, many books published in Germany affirm "that one of the greatest kings in Christendom, not long since dead, was often changed into a wolf." But what need of words? The conclusive proof remains, that many in our own day, being put to the torture, have confessed the fact, and been burned alive accordingly. The maintainers of the reality of witchcraft in the next century seem to have dropped the *werwolf* by common consent, though supported by the same kind of evidence they relied on in other matters, namely, that of ocular witnesses, the confession of the accused, and general notoriety.[1] So lately as 1765 the French peasants believed the "wild beast of the Gevaudan" to be a *loupgarou*, and that, I think, is his last appearance. Schoolcraft found the *werwolf* among the legends of our Red Men.

The particulars of the concubinage of witches with their familiars were discussed with a relish and a filthy minuteness worthy of Sanchez. Could children be born of these devilish amours? Of course they could, said one party; are there not plenty of cases in authentic history? Who was the father of Romulus and Remus? nay, not so very long ago, of Merlin? Another party denied the

[1] "He learned an herb of such a wondrous power
That, were it gathered at a certain hour
. . . . . .
That, with thrice saying a strange magic spell,
. . . . . .
It him a war-wolf instantly would make."
(Drayton's *Mooncalf*.)

possibility of the thing altogether. Among these was Luther, who declared the children either to be supposititious, or else mere imps, disguised as innocent sucklings, and known as *Wechselkinder*, or changelings, who were common enough, as everybody must be aware. Of the intercourse itself Luther had no doubts.[1] A third party took a middle ground, and believed that vermin and toads might be the offspring of such amours. And how did the Demon, a mere spiritual essence, contrive himself a body? Some would have it that he entered into dead bodies, by preference, of course, those of sorcerers. It is plain, from the confession of De la Rue, that this was the theory of his examiners. This also had historical evidence in its favor. There was the well-known leading case of the Bride of Corinth, for example. And but yesterday, as it were, at Crossen in Silesia, did not Christopher Monig, an apothecary's servant, come back after being buried, and do duty, as if nothing particular had happened, putting up prescriptions as usual, and "pounding drugs in the mortar with a mighty noise"? Apothecaries seem to have been special victims of these Satanic pranks, for another appeared at Reichenbach not long before, affirming that "he had poisoned several men with his drugs," which certainly gives an air of truth to the story. Accordingly the Devil is represented as

[1] Some Catholics, indeed, affirmed that he himself was the son of a demon who lodged in his father's house under the semblance of a merchant. Wierus says that a bishop preached to that effect in 1565, and gravely refutes the story.

being unpleasantly cold to the touch. "Caietan escrit qu'une sorciere demanda un iour au diable pourquoy il ne se rechauffoit, qui fist response qu'il faisoit ce qu'il pouuoit." Poor Devil!

> "'T was all in vain, a useless matter
> And blankets were about him pinned,
> Yet still his jaws and teeth they chatter
> Like a loose casement in the wind."

But there are cases in which the demon is represented as so hot that his grasp left a seared spot as black as charcoal. Perhaps some of them came from the torrid zone of their broad empire, and others from the thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice. Those who were not satisfied with the dead-body theory contented themselves, like Dr. More, with that of "adscititious particles," which has, to be sure, a more metaphysical and scholastic flavor about it. That the demons really came, either corporeally or through some diabolic illusion that amounted to the same thing, and that the witch devoted herself to him body and soul, scarce anybody was bold enough to doubt. To these familiars their venerable paramours gave endearing nicknames, such as My little Master, or My dear Martin, — the latter, probably, after the heresy of Luther, and when the rack was popish. The famous witch-finder Hopkins enables us to lengthen the list considerably. One witch whom he convicted, after being "kept from sleep two or three nights," called in five of her devilish servitors. The first was "*Holt*, who came in like a white kitling"; the second "*Jarmara*, like a fat spaniel

without any legs at all"; the third, "*Vinegar Tom*, who was like a long-tailed greyhound with an head like an oxe, with a long tail and broad eyes, who, when this discoverer spoke to and bade him to the place provided for him and his angells, immediately transformed himself into the shape of a child of foure yeares old, without a head, and gave half a dozen turnes about the house and vanished at the doore"; the fourth, "*Sack and Sugar*, like a black rabbet"; the fifth, "*Newes*, like a polcat." Other names of his finding were Elemauzer, Pywacket. Peck-in-the-Crown, Grizzel, and Greedygut, "which," he adds, "no mortal could invent." Middleton in his *Witch* gives us Titty, Tiffin, Suckin-Pidgen, Liard [Hamlet's Truepenny, perhaps], Robin, Hoppo, Stadlin, Hellwain, and Puckle. The name of *Robin*, which we met with in the confession of Alice Duke, has, perhaps, wider associations than the woman herself dreamed of; for, through Robin des Bois and Robin Hood, it may be another of those scattered traces that lead us back to Woden. Probably, however, it is only our old friend Robin Goodfellow, whose namesake Knecht Ruprecht makes such a figure in the German fairy mythology. Possessed persons called in higher agencies, — Thrones, Dominations, Princedoms, Powers; and among the witnesses against Urbain Grandier we find the names of Leviathan, Behemoth, Isaacarum, Belaam, Asmodeus, and Beherit, who spoke French very well, but were remarkably poor Latinists, knowing, indeed, almost as little of the language as if their youth had been

spent in writing Latin verses.[1] A shrewd Scotch physician tried them with Gaelic, but they could make nothing of it.

It was only when scepticism had begun to make itself uncomfortably inquisitive, that the Devil had any difficulty in making himself visible and even palpable. In simpler times, demons might almost seem to have made no inconsiderable part of the population. Trithemius tells of one who served as cook to the Bishop of Hildesheim (one shudders to think of the school where he had graduated as *Cordon bleu*), and who delectebatur esse cum hominibus, loquens, interrogans, respondens familiariter omnibus, aliquando visibiliter, aliquando invisibiliter apparens. This last feat of "appearing invisibly" would have been worth seeing. In 1554, the Devil came of a Christmas eve to Lawrence Doner, a parish priest in Saxony, and asked to be confessed. "Admissus, horrendas adversus Christum filium Dei blasphemias evomuit. Verum cum virtute verbi Dei a parocho victus esset, intolerabili post se relicto fœtore abiit." Splendidly dressed, with two companions, he frequented an honest man's house at Rothenberg. He brought with him a piper or fiddler, and contrived feasts and dances under pretext of wooing the goodman's daughter.

[1] Melancthon, however, used to tell of a possessed girl in Italy who knew no Latin, but the Devil in her, being asked by Bonamico, a Bolognese professor, what was the best verse in Virgil, answered at once:—

"Discite justitiam moniti, et non temnere divos," —

a somewhat remarkable concession on the part of a fallen angel.

He boasted that he was a foreign nobleman of immense wealth, and, for a time, was as successful as an Italian courier has been known to be at one of our fashionable watering-places. But the importunity of the guest and his friends at length displicuit patrifamilias, who accordingly one evening invited a minister of the Word to meet them at supper, and entered upon pious discourse with him from the word of God. Wherefore, seeking other matter of conversation, they said that there were many facetious things more suitable to exhilarate the supper-table than the interpretation of Holy Writ, and begged that they might be no longer bored with Scripture. Thoroughly satisfied by their singular way of thinking that his guests were diabolical, paterfamilias cries out in Latin worthy of Father Tom, "Apagite, vos scelerati nebulones!" This said, the tartarean impostor and his companions at once vanished with a great tumult, leaving behind them a most unpleasant fœtor and the bodies of three men who had been hanged. Perhaps if the clergyman-cure were faithfully tried upon the next fortune-hunting count with a large real estate in whiskers and an imaginary one in Barataria, he also might vanish, leaving a strong smell of barber's-shop, and taking with him a body that will come to the gallows in due time. It were worth trying. Luther tells of a demon who served as *famulus* in a monastery, fetching beer for the monks, and always insisting on honest measure for his money. There is one case on record where the Devil appealed to the courts for protection in his

rights. A monk, going to visit his mistress, fell dead as he was passing a bridge. The good and bad angel came to litigation about his soul. The case was referred by agreement to Richard, Duke of Normandy, who decided that the monk's body should be carried back to the bridge, and his soul restored to it by the claimants. If he persevered in keeping his assignation, the Devil was to have him, if not, then the Angel. The monk, thus put upon his guard, turns back and saves his soul, such as it was.[1] Perhaps the most impudent thing the Devil ever did was to open a school of magic in Toledo. The ceremony of graduation in this institution was peculiar. The senior class had all to run through a narrow cavern, and the venerable president was entitled to the hindmost, if he could catch him. Sometimes it happened that he caught only his shadow, and in that case the man who had been nimble enough to do what Goethe pronounces impossible, became the most profound magician of his year. Hence our proverb of *the Devil take the hindmost*, and Chamisso's story of Peter Schlemihl.

There is no end of such stories. They were repeated and believed by the gravest and wisest men down to the end of the sixteenth century; they

[1] This story seems mediæval and Gothic enough, but is hardly more so than bringing the case of the Furies *v.* Orestes before the Areopagus, and putting Apollo in the witness-box, as Æschylus has done. The classics, to be sure, are always so classic! In the *Eumenides*, Apollo takes the place of the good angel. And why not? For though a demon, and a lying one, he has crept in to the calendar under his other name of Helios as St. Helias. Could any of his oracles have foretold this?

were received undoubtingly by the great majority down to the end of the seventeenth. There was, indeed, abundant evidence that familiar spirits could be and were carried about in the pommels of swords, in phials, in finger-rings. The Devil was an easy way of accounting for what was beyond men's comprehension. He was the simple and satisfactory answer to all the conundrums of Nature. And what the Devil had not time to bestow his personal attention upon, the witch was always ready to do for him. Was a doctor at a loss about a case? How could he save his credit more cheaply than by pronouncing it witchcraft, and turning it over to the parson to be exorcised? Did a man's cow die suddenly, or his horse fall lame? Witchcraft! Did one of those writers of controversial quartos, heavy as the stone of Diomed, feel a pain in the small of his back? Witchcraft! Unhappily there were always ugly old women; and if you crossed them in any way, or did them a wrong, they were given to scolding and banning. If, within a year or two after, anything should happen to you or yours, why, of course, old Mother Bombie or Goody Blake must be at the bottom of it. For it was perfectly well known that there were witches, (does not God's law say expressly, "Suffer not a *witch* to live?") and that they could cast a spell by the mere glance of their eyes, could cause you to pine away by melting a waxen image, could give you a pain wherever they liked by sticking pins into the same, could bring sickness into your house or into your barn by hiding a Devils'

powder under the threshold; and who knows what else? Worst of all, they could send a demon into your body, who would cause you to vomit pins, hair, pebbles, knives, — indeed, almost anything short of a cathedral, — without any fault of yours, utter through you the most impertinent things *verbi ministro*, and, in short, make you the most important personage in the parish for the time being. Meanwhile, you were an object of condolence and contribution to the whole neighborhood. What wonder if a lazy apprentice or servant-maid (Bekker gives several instances of the kind detected by him) should prefer being possessed, with its attendant perquisites, to drudging from morning till night? And to any one who has observed how common a thing in certain states of mind self-connivance is, and how near it is to self-deception, it will not be surprising that some were, to all intents and purposes, really possessed. Who has never felt an almost irresistible temptation, and seemingly not self-originated, to let himself go? to let his mind gallop and kick and curvet and roll like a horse turned loose? in short, as we Yankees say, "to speak out in meeting"? Who never had it suggested to him by the fiend to break in at a funeral with a real character of the deceased, instead of that Mrs. Grundyfied view of him which the clergyman is so painfully elaborating in his prayer? Remove the pendulum of conventional routine, and the mental machinery runs on with a whir that gives a delightful excitement to sluggish temperaments, and is, perhaps, the natural relief of highly

nervous organizations. The tyrant Will is dethroned, and the sceptre snatched by his frolic sister Whim. This state of things, if continued, must become either insanity or imposture. But who can say precisely where consciousness ceases and a kind of automatic movement begins, the result of overexcitement? The subjects of these strange disturbances have been almost always young women or girls at a critical period of their development. Many of the most remarkable cases have occurred in convents, and both there and elsewhere, as in other kinds of temporary nervous derangement, have proved contagious. Sometimes, as in the affair of the nuns of Loudun, there seems every reason to suspect a conspiracy; but I am not quite ready to say that Grandier was the only victim, and that some of the energumens were not unconscious tools in the hands of priestcraft and revenge. One thing is certain: that in the dioceses of humanely sceptical prelates the cases of possession were sporadic only, and either cured, or at least hindered from becoming epidemic, by episcopal mandate. Cardinal Mazarin, when Papal vice-legate at Avignon, made an end of the trade of exorcism within his government.

But scepticism, down to the beginning of the eighteenth century, was the exception. Undoubting and often fanatical belief was the rule. It is easy enough to be astonished at it, still easier to misapprehend it. How could sane men have been deceived by such nursery-tales? Still more, how could they have suffered themselves, on what seems

to us such puerile evidence, to consent to such atrocious cruelties, nay, to urge them on? As to the belief, we should remember that the human mind, when it sails by *dead reckoning*, without the possibility of a fresh observation, perhaps without the instruments necessary to take one, will sometimes bring up in very strange latitudes. Do we of the nineteenth century, then, always strike out boldly into the unlandmarked deep of speculation and shape our courses by the stars, or do we not sometimes con our voyage by what seem to us the firm and familiar headlands of truth, planted by God himself, but which may, after all, be no more than an insubstantial mockery of cloud or airy juggle of mirage? The refraction of our own atmosphere has by no means made an end of its tricks with the appearances of things in our little world of thought. The men of that day believed what they saw, or, as our generation would put it, what they *thought* they saw. Very good. The vast majority of men believe, and always will believe, on the same terms. When one comes along who can partly distinguish the thing seen from that travesty or distortion of it which the thousand disturbing influences within him and without him would *make* him see, we call him a great philosopher. All our intellectual charts are engraved according to his observations, and we steer contentedly by them till some man whose brain rests on a still more unmovable basis corrects them still further by eliminating what his predecessor thought *he* saw. We must account for many former aberrations in the moral world by

the presence of more or less nebulous bodies of a certain gravity which modified the actual position of truth in its relation to the mind, and which, if they have now vanished, have made way, perhaps, for others whose influence will in like manner be allowed for by posterity in their estimate of us. In matters of faith, astrology has by no means yet given place to astronomy, nor alchemy become chemistry, which knows what to seek for and how to find it. In the days of witchcraft all science was still in the condition of *May-be;* it is only just bringing itself to find a higher satisfaction in the impertubable *Must-be* of law. We should remember that what we call *natural* may have a very different meaning for one generation from that which it has for another. The boundary between the "other" world and this ran till very lately, and at some points runs still, through a vast tract of unexplored border-land of very uncertain tenure. Even now the territory which Reason holds firmly as Lord Warden of the marches during daylight, is subject to sudden raids of Imagination by night. But physical darkness is not the only one that lends opportunity to such incursions; and in midsummer 1692, when Ebenezer Bapson, looking out of the fort at Gloucester in broad day, saw shapes of men, sometimes in blue coats like Indians, sometimes in white waistcoats like Frenchmen, it seemed *more* natural to most men that they should be spectres than men of flesh and blood. Granting the assumed premises, as nearly every one did, the syllogism was perfect.

So much for the apparent reasonableness of the belief, since every man's logic is satisfied with a legitimate deduction from his own postulates. Causes for the cruelty to which the belief led are not further to seek. Toward no crime have men shown themselves so cold-bloodedly cruel as in punishing difference of belief, and the first systematic persecutions for witchcraft began with the inquisitors in the South of France in the thirteenth century. It was then and there that the charge of sexual uncleanness with demons was first devised. Persecuted heretics would naturally meet in darkness and secret, and it was easy to blacken such meetings with the accusation of deeds so foul as to shun the light of day and the eyes of men. They met to renounce God and worship the Devil. But this was not enough. To excite popular hatred and keep it fiercely alive, fear must be mingled with it; and this end was reached by making the heretic also a sorcerer, who, by the Devil's help, could and would work all manner of fiendish mischief. When by this means the belief in a league between witch and demon had become firmly established, witchcraft grew into a well-defined crime, hateful enough in itself to furnish pastime for the torturer and food for the fagot. In the fifteenth century, witches were burned by thousands, and it may well be doubted if all paganism together was ever guilty of so many human sacrifices in the same space of time. In the sixteenth, these holocausts were appealed to as conclusive evidence of the reality of the crime, terror was once

more aroused, the more vindictive that its sources were so vague and intangible, and cruelty was the natural consequence. Nothing but an abject panic, in which the whole use of reason, except as a mill to grind out syllogisms, was altogether lost, will account for some chapters in Bodin's *Demonomanie*. Men were surrounded by a forever-renewed conspiracy whose ramifications they could not trace, though they might now and then lay hold on one of its associates. Protestant and Catholic might agree in nothing else, but they were unanimous in their dread of this invisible enemy. If fright could turn civilized Englishmen into savage Iroquois during the imagined negro plots of New York in 1741 and of Jamaica in 1865, if the same invisible omnipresence of Fenianism shall be able to work the same miracle, as it perhaps will, next year in England itself, why need we be astonished that the blows should have fallen upon many an innocent head when men were striking wildly in self-defence, as they supposed, against the unindictable Powers of Darkness, against a plot which could be carried on by human agents, but with invisible accessories and by supernatural means? In the seventeenth century an element was added which pretty well supplied the place of heresy as a sharpener of hatred and an awakener of indefinable suspicion. Scepticism had been born into the world, almost more hateful than heresy, because it had the manners of good society and contented itself with a smile, a shrug, an almost imperceptible lift of the eyebrow, — a kind of reasoning especially

exasperating to disputants of the old school, who still cared about victory, even when they did not about the principles involved in the debate.

The Puritan emigration to New England took place at a time when the belief in diabolic agency had been hardly called in question, much less shaken. The early adventurers brought it with them to a country in every way fitted, not only to keep it alive, but to feed it into greater vigor. The solitude of the wilderness (and solitude alone, by dis-furnishing the brain of its commonplace associations, makes it an apt theatre for the delusions of imagination), the nightly forest noises, the glimpse, perhaps, through the leaves, of a painted savage face, uncertain whether of redman or Devil, but more likely of the latter, above all, that measureless mystery of the unknown and conjectural stretching away illimitable on all sides and vexing the mind, somewhat as physical darkness does, with intimation and misgiving, — under all these influences, whatever seeds of superstition had in any way got over from the Old World would find an only too congenial soil in the New. The leaders of that emigration believed and taught that demons loved to dwell in waste and wooded places, that the Indians did homage to the bodily presence of the Devil, and that he was especially enraged against those who had planted an outpost of the true faith upon this continent hitherto all his own. In the third generation of the settlement, in proportion as living faith decayed, the clergy insisted all the more strongly on the traditions of the

elders, and as they all placed the sources of goodness and religion in some inaccessible Other World rather than in the soul of man himself, they clung to every shred of the supernatural as proof of the existence of that Other World, and of its interest in the affairs of this. They had the countenance of all the great theologians, Catholic as well as Protestant, of the leaders of the Reformation, and in their own day of such men as More and Glanvil and Baxter.[1] If to all these causes, more or less operative in 1692, we add the harassing excitement of an Indian war (urged on by Satan in his hatred of the churches), with its daily and nightly apprehensions and alarms, we shall be less astonished that the delusion in Salem Village rose so high than that it subsided so soon.

I have already said that it was religious antipathy or clerical interest that first made heresy and witchcraft identical and cast them into the same expiatory fire. The invention was a Catholic one, but it is plain that Protestants soon learned its value and were not slow in making it a plague to the inventor. It was not till after the Reformation

[1] Mr. Lecky, in his admirable chapter on Witchcraft, gives a little more credit to the enlightenment of the Church of England in this matter than it would seem fairly to deserve. More and Glanvil were faithful sons of the Church; and if the persecution of witches was especially rife during the ascendency of the Puritans, it was because they happened to be in power while there was a reaction against Sadducism. All the convictions were under the statute of James I., who was no Puritan. After the restoration, the reaction was the other way, and Hobbism became the fashion. It is more philosophical to say that the age believes this and that, than that the particular men who live in it do so.

that there was any systematic hunting out of witches in England. Then, no doubt, the innocent charms and rhyming prayers of the old religion were regarded as incantations, and twisted into evidence against miserable beldames who mumbled over in their dotage what they had learned at their mother's knee. It is plain, at least, that this was one of Agnes Simpson's crimes.

But as respects the frivolity of the proof adduced, there was nothing to choose between Catholic and Protestant. Out of civil and canon law a net was woven through whose meshes there was no escape, and into it the victims were driven by popular clamor. Suspicion of witchcraft was justified by general report, by the ill-looks of the suspected, by being silent when accused, by her mother's having been a witch, by flight, by exclaiming when arrested, *I am lost!* by a habit of using imprecations, by the evidence of two witnesses, by the accusation of a man on his death-bed, by a habit of being away from home at night, by fifty other things equally grave. Anybody might be an accuser, — a personal enemy, an infamous person, a child, parent, brother, or sister. Once accused, the culprit was not to be allowed to touch the ground on the way to prison, was not to be left alone there lest she should have interviews with the Devil and get from him the means of being insensible under torture, was to be stripped and shaved in order to prevent her concealing some charm, or to facilitate the finding of witch-marks. Her right thumb tied to her left great-toe, and *vice versa*, she

was thrown into the water. If she floated, she was a witch; if she sank and was drowned, she was lucky. This trial, as old as the days of Pliny the Elder, was gone out of fashion, the author of *De Lamiis* assures us, in his day, everywhere but in Westphalia. "On halfproof or strong presumption," says Bodin, the judge may proceed to torture. If the witch did not shed tears under the rack, it was almost conclusive of guilt. On this topic of torture he grows eloquent. The rack does very well, but to thrust splinters between the nails and flesh of hands and feet "is the most excellent gehenna of all, and practised in Turkey." That of Florence, where they seat the criminal in a hanging chair so contrived that if he drop asleep it overturns and leaves him hanging by a rope which wrenches his arms backwards, is perhaps even better, "for the limbs are not broken, and without trouble or labor one gets out the truth." It is well in carrying the accused to the chamber of torture to cause some in the next room to shriek fearfully as if on the rack, that they may be terrified into confession. It is proper to tell them that their accomplices have confessed and accused them ("though they have done no such thing") that they may do the same out of revenge. The judge may also with a good conscience lie to the prisoner and tell her that if she admit her guilt, she may be pardoned. This is Bodin's opinion, but Walburger, writing a century later, concludes that the judge may go to any extent *citra mendacium*, this side of lying. He may tell the witch that he will

be favorable, meaning to the Commonwealth; that he will see that she has a new house built for her, that is, a wooden one to burn her in; that her confession will be most useful in saving her life, to wit, her life eternal. There seems little difference between the German's white lies and the Frenchman's black ones. As to punishment, Bodin is fierce for burning. Though a Protestant, he quotes with evident satisfaction a decision of the magistrates that one "who had eaten flesh on a Friday should be burned alive unless he repented, and if he repented, yet he was hanged out of compassion." A child under twelve who will not confess meeting with the Devil should be put to death if convicted of the fact, though Bodin allows that Satan made no express compact with those who had not arrived at puberty. This he learned from the examination of Jeanne Harvillier, who deposed, "that, though her mother dedicated her to Satan so soon as she was born, yet she was not married to him, nor did he demand that, or her renunciation of God, till she had attained the age of twelve."

There is no more painful reading than this, except the trials of the witches themselves. These awaken, by turns, pity, indignation, disgust, and dread, — dread at the thought of what the human mind may be brought to believe not only probable, but proved. But it is well to be put upon our guard by lessons of this kind, for the wisest man is in some respects little better than a madman in a strait-waistcoat of habit, public opinion, pru-

dence, or the like. Scepticism began at length to make itself felt, but it spread slowly and was shy of proclaiming itself. The orthodox party was not backward to charge with sorcery whoever doubted their facts or pitied their victims. Bodin says that it is good cause of suspicion against a judge if he turn the matter into ridicule, or incline toward mercy. The mob, as it always is, was orthodox. It was dangerous to doubt, it might be fatal to deny. In 1453 Guillaume de Lure was burned at Poitiers on his own confession of a compact with Satan, by which he agreed "to preach and did preach that everything told of sorcerers was mere fable, and that it was cruelly done to condemn them to death." This contract was found among his papers signed "with the Devil's own claw," as Howell says speaking of a similar case. It is not to be wondered at that the earlier doubters were cautious. There was literally a reign of terror, and during such *régimes* men are commonly found more eager to be informers and accusers than of counsel for the defence. Peter of Abano is reckoned among the earliest unbelievers who declared himself openly.[1] Chaucer was certainly a sceptic, as appears by the opening of the Wife of Bath's Tale. Wierus, a German physician, was the first to undertake (1563) a refutation of the

[1] I have no means of ascertaining whether he did or not. He was more probably charged with it by the inquisitors. Mr. Lecky seems to write of him only upon hearsay, for he calls him Peter "of Apono," apparently translating a French translation of the Latin "Aponus." The only book attributed to him that I have ever seen is itself a kind of manual of magic.

facts and assumptions on which the prosecutions for witchcraft were based. His explanation of the phenomena is mainly physiological. Mr. Lecky hardly states his position correctly in saying "that he never dreamed of restricting the sphere of the supernatural." Wierus went as far as he dared. No one can read his book without feeling that he insinuates much more than he positively affirms or denies. He would have weakened his cause if he had seemed to disbelieve in demoniacal possession, since that had the supposed warrant of Scripture; but it may be questioned whether he uses the words *Satan* and *Demon* in any other way than that in which many people still use the word *Nature*. He was forced to accept certain premises of his opponents by the line of his argument. When he recites incredible stories without comment, it is not that he believes them, but that he thinks their absurdity obvious. That he wrote under a certain restraint is plain from the Colophon of his book, where he says: "Nihil autem hic ita assertum volo, quod æquiori judicio Catholicæ Christi Ecclesiæ non omnino submittam, palinodia mox spontanea emendaturus, si erroris alicubi convincar." A great deal of latent and timid scepticism seems to have been brought to the surface by his work. Many eminent persons wrote to him in gratitude and commendation. In the Preface to his shorter treatise *De Lamiis* (which is a mere abridgment), he thanks God that his labors had "in many places caused the cruelty against innocent blood to slacken," and that "some more distinguished judges

treat more mildly and even absolve from capital punishment the wretched old women branded with the odious name of witches by the populace." In the *Pseudomonarchia Dæmonum*, he gives a kind of census of the diabolic kingdom,[1] but evidently with secret intention of making the whole thing ridiculous, or it would not have so stirred the bile of Bodin. Wierus was saluted by many contemporaries as a Hercules who destroyed monsters, and himself not immodestly claimed the civic wreath for having saved the lives of fellow-citizens. Posterity should not forget a man who really did an honest life's work for humanity and the liberation of thought. From one of the letters appended to his book we learn that Jacobus Savagius, a physician of Antwerp, had twenty years before written a treatise with the same design, but confining himself to the medical argument exclusively. He was, however, prevented from publishing it by death. It is pleasant to learn from Bodin that Alciato, the famous lawyer and emblematist, was one of those who "laughed and made others laugh at the evidence relied on at the trials, insisting that witchcraft was a thing impossible and fabulous, and so softened the hearts of judges (in spite of the fact that an inquisitor had caused to burn more than a hundred sorcerers in Piedmont), that all the accused escaped." In England, Reginald Scot was

[1] "With the names and surnames," says Bodin, indignantly, "of seventy-two princes, and of seven million four hundred and five thousand nine hundred and twenty-six devils, *errors excepted*."

the first to enter the lists in behalf of those who had no champion. His book, published in 1584, is full of manly sense and spirit, above all, of a tender humanity that gives it a warmth which we miss in every other written on the same side. In the dedication to Sir Roger Manwood he says: "I renounce all protection and despise all friendship that might serve towards the suppressing or supplanting of truth." To his kinsman, Sir Thomas Scot, he writes: "My greatest adversaries are *young ignorance* and *old custom;* for what folly soever tract of time hath fostered, it is so superstitiously pursued of some, as though no error could be acquainted with custom." And in his Preface he thus states his motives: "God that knoweth my heart is witness, and you that read my book shall see, that my drift and purpose in this enterprise tendeth only to these respects. First, that the glory and power of God be not so abridged and abased as to be thrust into the hand or lip of a lewd old woman, whereby the work of the Creator should be attributed to the power of a creature. Secondly, that the religion of the Gospel may be seen to stand without such peevish trumpery. Thirdly, that lawful favor and Christian compassion be rather used towards these poor souls than rigor and extremity. Because they which are commonly accused of witchcraft are the least sufficient of all other persons to speak for themselves, as having the most base and simple education of all others, the extremity of their age giving them leave to dote, their poverty to beg, their wrongs to chide

and threaten (as being void of any other way of revenge), their humor melancholical to be full of imaginations, from whence chiefly proceedeth the vanity of their confessions. . . . And for so much as the mighty help themselves together, and the poor widow's cry, though it reach to Heaven, is scarce heard here upon earth, I thought good (according to my poor ability) to make intercession that some part of common rigor and some points of hasty judgment may be advised upon." . . . The case is nowhere put with more point, or urged with more sense and eloquence, than by Scot, whose book contains also more curious matter, in the way of charms, incantations, exorcisms, and feats of legerdemain, than any other of the kind.

Other books followed on the same side, of which Bekker's, published about a century later, was the most important. It is well reasoned, learned, and tedious to a masterly degree. But though the belief in witchcraft might be shaken, it still had the advantage of being on the whole orthodox and respectable. Wise men, as usual, insisted on regarding superstition as of one substance with faith, and objected to any scouring of the shield of religion, lest, like that of Cornelius Scriblerus, it should suddenly turn out to be nothing more than "a paltry old sconce with the nozzle broke off." The Devil continued to be the only recognized Minister Resident of God upon earth. When we remember that one man's accusation on his death-bed was enough to constitute grave presumption of witchcraft, it might seem singular that dying testimonies

were so long of no avail against the common credulity. But it should be remembered that men are mentally no less than corporeally gregarious, and that public opinion, the fetish even of the nineteenth century, makes men, whether for good or ill, into a mob, which either hurries the individual judgment along with it, or runs over and tramples it into insensibility. Those who are so fortunate as to occupy the philosophical position of spectators *ab extra* are very few in any generation or any party, and may safely count on being misunderstood and therefore misrepresented.

There were exceptions, it is true, but the old cruelties went on. In 1610 a case came before the tribunal of the *Tourelle*, and when the counsel for the accused argued at some length that sorcery was ineffectual, and that the Devil could not destroy life, President Séguier told him that he might spare his breath, since the court had long been convinced on those points. And yet two years later the grand-vicars of the Bishop of Beauvais solemnly summoned Beelzebuth, Satan, Motelu, and Briffaut, with the four legions under their charge, to appear and sign an agreement never again to enter the bodies of reasonable or other creatures, under pain of excommunication! If they refused, they were to be given over to "the power of hell to be tormented and tortured more than was customary, three thousand years after the judgment." Under this proclamation they all came in, like reconstructed rebels, and signed whatever document was put before them. Toward the middle of the sev-

enteenth century, the safe thing was still to believe, or at any rate to profess belief. Sir Thomas Browne, though he had written an exposure of "Vulgar Errors," testified in court to his faith in the possibility of witchcraft. Sir Kenelm Digby, in his "Observations on the Religio Medici," takes, perhaps, as advanced ground as any, when he says: "Neither do I deny there are witches; I only reserve my assent till I meet with stronger motives to carry it." The position of even enlightened men of the world in that age might be called semi-sceptical. La Bruyère, no doubt, expresses the average of opinion: "Que penser de la magie et du sortilége? La théorie en est obscurcie, les principes vagues, incertains, et qui approchent du visionnaire; mais il y a des faits embarrassants, affirmés par des hommes graves qui les ont vus; les admettre tous, ou les nier tous, paraît un égal inconvénient, et j'ose dire qu'en cela comme en toutes les choses extraordinaires et qui sortent des communes règles, il y a un parti à trouver entre les âmes crédules et les esprits forts."[1] Montaigne, to be sure, had long before declared his entire disbelief, and yet the Parliament of Bordeaux, his own city, condemned a man to be burned as a *noueur d'aiguillettes* so lately as 1718. Indeed, it was not, says Maury, till the first quarter of the eighteenth century that one might safely publish his incredulity in France. In Scotland, witches were burned for the last time in 1722. Garinet cites the case of a girl near Amiens pos-

[1] Cited by Maury, p. 221, note 4.

sessed by three demons, — Mimi, Zozo, and Crapoulet, — in 1816.

The two beautiful volumes of Mr. Upham are, so far as I know, unique in their kind. They are in some respects a clinical lecture on human nature, as well as on the special epidemical disease under which the patient is laboring. He has written not merely a history of the so-called Salem Witchcraft, but has made it intelligible by a minute account of the place where the delusion took its rise, the persons concerned in it, whether as actors or sufferers, and the circumstances which led to it. By deeds, wills, and the records of courts and churches, by plans, maps, and drawings, he has recreated Salem Village as it was two hundred years ago, so that we seem wellnigh to talk with its people and walk over its fields, or through its cart-tracks and bridle-roads. We are made partners in parish and village feuds, we share in the chimney-corner gossip, and learn for the first time how many mean and merely human motives, whether consciously or unconsciously, gave impulse and intensity to the passions of the actors in that memorable tragedy which dealt the death-blow in this country to the belief in Satanic compacts. Mr. Upham's minute details, which give us something like a photographic picture of the in-door and out-door scenery that surrounded the events he narrates, help us materially to understand their origin and the course they inevitably took. In this respect his book is original and full of new interest. To know the kind of life these people led, the kind

of place they dwelt in, and the tenor of their thought, makes much real to us that was conjectural before. The influences of outward nature, of remoteness from the main highways of the world's thought, of seclusion, as the foster-mother of traditionary beliefs, of a hard life and unwholesome diet in exciting or obscuring the brain through the nerves and stomach, have been hitherto commonly overlooked in accounting for the phenomena of witchcraft. The great persecutions for this imaginary crime have always taken place in lonely places, among the poor, the ignorant, and, above all, the ill-fed.

One of the best things in Mr. Upham's book is the portrait of Parris, the minister of Salem Village, in whose household the children who, under the assumed possession of evil spirits, became accusers and witnesses, began their tricks. He is shown to us pedantic and something of a martinet in church discipline and ceremony, somewhat inclined to magnify his office, fond of controversy as he was skilful and rather unscrupulous in the conduct of it, and glad of any occasion to make himself prominent. Was he the unconscious agent of his own superstition, or did he take advantage of the superstition of others for purposes of his own? The question is not an easy one to answer. Men will sacrifice everything, sometimes even themselves, to their pride of logic and their love of victory. Bodin loses sight of humanity altogether in his eagerness to make out his case, and display his learning in the canon and civil law. He does not

scruple to exaggerate, to misquote, to charge his antagonists with atheism, sorcery, and insidious designs against religion and society, that he may persuade the jury of Europe to bring in a verdict of guilty.[1] Yet there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of his belief. Was Parris equally sincere? On the whole, I think it likely that he was. But if we acquit Parris, what shall we say of the demoniacal girls? The probability seems to be that those who began in harmless deceit found themselves at length involved so deeply, that dread of shame and punishment drove them to an extremity where their only choice was between sacrificing themselves, or others to save themselves. It is not unlikely that some of the younger girls were so far carried along by imitation or imaginative sympathy as in some degree to "credit their own lie." Any one who has watched or made experiments in animal magnetism knows how easy it is to persuade young women of nervous temperaments that they are doing that by the will of another which they really do by an obscure volition of their own, under the influence of an imagination adroitly guided by the magnetizer. The marvellous is so fascinating, that nine persons in ten, if once persuaded that a thing is possible, are eager to believe it probable, and at last cunning in convincing themselves that it is proved. But it is impossible to believe that the possessed girls in this case did not know how the pins they vomited got into their mouths. Mr.

[1] There is a kind of compensation in the fact that he himself lived to be accused of sorcery and Judaism.

Upham has shown, in the case of Anne Putnam, Jr., an hereditary tendency to hallucination, if not insanity. One of her uncles had seen the Devil by broad daylight in the novel disguise of a blue boar, in which shape, as a tavern sign, he had doubtless proved more seductive than in his more ordinary transfigurations. A great deal of light is let in upon the question of whether there was deliberate imposture or no, by the narrative of Rev. Mr. Turell of Medford, written in 1728, which gives us all the particulars of a case of pretended possession in Littleton, eight years before. The eldest of three sisters began the game, and found herself before long obliged to take the next in age into her confidence. By and by the youngest, finding her sisters pitied and caressed on account of their supposed sufferings while she was neglected, began to play off the same tricks. The usual phenomena followed. They were convulsed, they fell into swoons, they were pinched and bruised, they were found in the water, on the top of a tree or of the barn. To these places they said they were conveyed through the air, and there were those who had seen them flying, which shows how strong is the impulse that prompts men to conspire with their own delusion, where the marvellous is concerned.[1] The girls did whatever they had heard or read that was common in such cases. They even accused a respectable neighbor as the cause of

[1] I myself have talked with men (one of them not unknown as a man of science) who had seen Hume float out of a window in London and back again.

their torments. There were some doubters, but "so far as I can learn," says Turell, "the greater number believed and said they were under the evil hand, or possessed by Satan." But the most interesting fact of all is supplied by the confession of the elder sister, made eight years later under stress of remorse. Having once begun, they found returning more tedious than going o'er. To keep up their cheat made life a burden to them, but they could not stop. Thirty years earlier, their juggling might have proved as disastrous as that at Salem Village. There, parish and boundary feuds had set enmity between neighbors, and the girls, called on to say who troubled them, cried out upon those whom they had been wont to hear called by hard names at home. They probably had no notion what a frightful ending their comedy was to have; but at any rate they were powerless, for the reins had passed out of their hands into the sterner grasp of minister and magistrate. They were dragged deeper and deeper, as men always are by their own lie.

The proceedings at the Salem trials are sometimes spoken of as if they were exceptionally cruel. But, in fact, if compared with others of the same kind, they were exceptionally humane. At a time when Baxter could tell with satisfaction of a "*reading* parson" eighty years old, who, after being kept awake five days and nights, confessed his dealings with the Devil, it is rather wonderful that no mode of torture other than mental was tried at Salem. Nor were the magistrates more besotted

or unfair than usual in dealing with the evidence. Now and then, it is true, a man more sceptical or intelligent than common had exposed some pretended demoniac. The Bishop of Orléans, in 1598, read aloud to Martha Brossier the story of the Ephesian Widow, and the girl, hearing Latin, and taking it for Scripture, went forthwith into convulsions. He found also that the Devil who possessed her could not distinguish holy from profane water. But that there were deceptions did not shake the general belief in the reality of possession. The proof in such cases could not and ought not to be subjected to the ordinary tests. "If many natural things," says Bodin, "are incredible and some of them incomprehensible, *a fortiori* the power of supernatural intelligences and the doings of spirits are incomprehensible. But error has risen to its height in this, that those who have denied the power of spirits and the doings of sorcerers have wished to dispute physically concerning supernatural or metaphysical things, which is a notable incongruity." That the girls were really possessed, seemed to Stoughton and his colleagues the most rational theory, — a theory in harmony with the rest of their creed, and sustained by the unanimous consent of pious men as well as the evidence of that most cunning and least suspected of all sorcerers, the Past, — and how confront or cross-examine invisible witnesses, especially witnesses whom it was a kind of impiety to doubt? Evidence that would have been convincing in ordinary cases was of no weight against the general prepossession. In

1659 the house of a man in Brightling, Sussex, was troubled by a demon, who set it on fire at various times, and was continually throwing things about. The clergy of the neighborhood held a day of fasting and prayer in consequence. A maid-servant was afterwards detected as the cause of the missiles. But this did not in the least stagger Mr. Bennet, minister of the parish, who merely says: "There was a *seeming blur* cast, though not on the whole, yet upon some part of it, for their servant-girl was at last found throwing some things," and goes off into a eulogium on the "efficacy of prayer."

In one respect, to which Mr. Upham first gives the importance it deserves, the Salem trials were distinguished from all others. Though some of the accused had been terrified into confession, yet not one persevered in it, but all died protesting their innocence, and with unshaken constancy, though an acknowledgment of guilt would have saved the lives of all. This martyr proof of the efficacy of Puritanism in the character and conscience may be allowed to outweigh a great many sneers at Puritan fanaticism. It is at least a testimony to the courage and constancy which a profound religious sentiment had made common among the people of whom these sufferers were average representatives. The accused also were not, as was commonly the case, abandoned by their friends. In all the trials of this kind there is nothing so pathetic as the picture of Jonathan Cary holding up the weary arms of his wife during her trial, and wiping away the

sweat from her brow and the tears from her face. Another remarkable fact is this, that while in other countries the delusion was extinguished by the incredulity of the upper classes and the interference of authority, here the reaction took place among the people themselves, and here only was an attempt made at some legislative restitution, however inadequate. Mr. Upham's sincere and honest narrative, while it never condescends to a formal plea, is the best vindication possible of a community which was itself the greatest sufferer by the persecution which its credulity engendered.

If any lesson may be drawn from the tragical and too often disgustful history of witchcraft, it is not one of exultation at our superior enlightenment or shame at the shortcomings of the human intellect. It is rather one of charity and self-distrust. When we see what inhuman absurdities men in other respects wise and good have clung to as the corner-stone of their faith in immortality and a divine ordering of the world, may we not suspect that those who now maintain political or other doctrines which seem to us barbarous and unenlightened may be, for all that, in the main as virtuous and clear-sighted as ourselves? While we maintain our own side with an honest ardor of conviction, let us not forget to allow for mortal incompetence in the other. And if there are men who regret the Good Old Times, without too clear a notion of what they were, they should at least be thankful that we are rid of that misguided energy of faith which justified conscience in making men

unrelentingly cruel. Even Mr. Lecky softens a little at the thought of the many innocent and beautiful beliefs of which a growing scepticism has robbed us in the decay of supernaturalism. But we need not despair; for, after all, scepticism is first cousin of credulity, and we are not surprised to see the tough doubter Montaigne hanging up his offerings in the shrine of our Lady of Loreto. Scepticism commonly takes up the room left by defect of imagination, and is the very quality of mind most likely to seek for sensual proof of super-sensual things. If one came from the dead, it could not believe; and yet it longs for such a witness, and will put up with a very dubious one. So long as night is left and the helplessness of dream, the wonderful will not cease from among men. While we are the solitary prisoners of darkness, the witch Fancy seats herself at the loom of thought, and weaves strange figures into the web that looks so familiar and ordinary in the dry light of every-day. Just as we are flattering ourselves that the old spirit of sorcery is laid, behold the tables are tipping and the floors drumming all over Christendom. The faculty of wonder is not defunct, but is only getting more and more emancipated from the unnatural service of terror, and restored to its proper function as a minister of delight. A higher mode of belief is the best exorciser, because it makes the spiritual at one with the actual world instead of hostile, or at best alien. It has been the grossly material interpretations of spiritual doctrine that have given occasion to the

two extremes of superstition and unbelief. While the resurrection of the body has been insisted on, that resurrection from the body which is the privilege of all has been forgotten. Superstition in its baneful form was largely due to the enforcement by the Church of arguments that involved a *petitio principii*, for it is the miserable necessity of all false logic to accept of very ignoble allies. Fear became at length its chief expedient for the maintenance of its power; and as there is a beneficent necessity laid upon a majority of mankind to sustain and perpetuate the order of things they are born into, and to make all new ideas manfully prove their right, first, to be at all, and then to be heard, many even superior minds dreaded the tearing away of vicious accretions as dangerous to the whole edifice of religion and society. But if this old ghost be fading away in what we regard as the dawn of a better day, we may console ourselves by thinking that perhaps, after all, we are not so *much* wiser than our ancestors. The rappings, the trance mediums, the visions of hands without bodies, the sounding of musical instruments without visible fingers, the miraculous inscriptions on the naked flesh, the enlivenment of furniture, — we have invented none of them, they are all heirlooms. There is surely room for yet another schoolmaster, when a score of seers advertise themselves in Boston newspapers. And if the metaphysicians can never rest till they have taken their watch to pieces and have arrived at a happy positivism as to its structure, though at the risk of bringing it to a

no-go, we may be sure that the majority will always take more satisfaction in seeing its hands mysteriously move on, even if they should err a little as to the precise time of day established by the astronomical observatories.

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